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ICE BOUND.

BY

WALTER THORNBURY,

AUTHOR OF

“BRITISH ARTISTS FROM HOGARTH TO TURNER,”

“EVERY MAN HIS OWN TRUMPETER,”

ETC., ETC.

“Thrilling regions of thick-ribbed ice.”

Measure for Measure.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

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ICE BOUND.

THE LITTLE BLACK BOX.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE TRUE PROTESTANTS.

It was the sunset of a day at the latter end of June; the rich light was burning in the western sky with a radiancy as if the golden doors that bar us from heaven had been for a moment thrown apart—a flood of molten gold, jetted up from some western volcano, whose fires seemed to flash out here and there through the swimming radi-

ancy spreading over London, that had but lately arisen from its ashes like a spirit, purified and radiant, from the black embers of the martyr's pile. The western light, so full of ineffable splendour, blazing like a second conflagration on a thousand windows, both of garret and palace, weltered in such flakes of metallic lustre upon the Thames, that the old buccaneers at Wapping must have rubbed their eyes, and fancied themselves anchored safe in the El Dorado of their life-long dreams. But earth-worn men, now returning from their labours, turned their eyes upon the pavement, and cared not for such every-day wonders; a thousand watermen drove their oars through the glittering water, and thought only of the fare.

Nor was it the property of such materialised minds alone to despise transitory nature pageants like this; for, in its full lustre, the light passed into the rooms of a palace in Aldersgate Street—a nobleman's mansion of the Palladian style of architecture, rich with

wreaths and dancing boys, Ionic pillars and sculptured pediments, designed by Inigo Jones himself, if we may trust to the traces of his evident manner. At the window of a magnificent room, hung with embroidered yellow satin that now gleamed like burnished metal in the innocuous flame of the sun, sat Lord Shaftesbury, the ambitious ruler of the turbulent Protestant democracy of London; the most powerful titled demagogue that perhaps England has ever known, careless of it all.

Anthony Ashley Cooper, otherwise Lord Shaftesbury, was at this time in about the fifty-sixth year of his age. His early excesses, and the infirm health produced by a fall from his carriage at Breda, when arranging the return of Charles, had made him prematurely old. His hair, long since grey, was, however, hidden by a richly curled wig of dark brown hair that streamed down almost to his shoulders, and somewhat concealed the inroads of time. But for a certain hollowness of cheek and eye,

Shaftesbury would have been still handsome : for his features were bold and in harmony ; his mouth firm, but contracted by habitual craft ; his chin strongly cast and well set. His restless and eager eye, however, betrayed, through all the caution of the diplomatist, the fierce and hungry ambition of the man. Nothing of what his enemies called versatility was visible in his face ; for his political changes had been the result of deliberate and unprincipled premeditation. He had never shifted his parliamentary seat but to get nearer the throne. The deep deliberation with which he betrayed government after government had preserved the respect of his opponents and the awe of the multitude, accustomed to political changes still more palpably base and treacherous.

Not a year since Shaftesbury had seceded from the Privy Council, of which he was lord president, to retire to his fortress in the city, over which he now ruled with a despotism more powerful than nominal royalty. Ten thousand "brisk boys," as he called them, would rise

in arms at the movement of his finger, and the court at once dreaded and detested an enemy so subtle and so powerful. More practical than Halifax, more wise than Essex, of a more comprehensive mind than Sunderland, Shaftesbury had now reached the culminating point of his political greatness. The planners of the Popish plot acknowledged him the saviour of the nation ; the infamous Oates himself laid all his honours at his patron's feet. If he appeared in the city, the turbulent 'prentices, flaunting with party-colours, crowded to drag his carriage ; at civic festivals he ruled as a king. Even at Whitehall he divided crowds with his sovereign, and his appearance in the park was sufficient to gather round him a vast retinue of friends, parasites, and trimmers. The Whigs, the Birminghams, the Patchmen, and the Exclusionists looked upon him as a deity ; the anti-Birminghams, the Abhorrrers, and the Tantivies—in a word, the Tories—as a monster of sedition, a rebel, and a political quacksalver. Dryden's party,

never forgetful of the poet's blood-drawing satire, called him Achitophel; the Earl's own friends looked upon him as a second David sent to slay the Goliath of Popery. His party consisted of rich citizens, disbanded officers, and wandering fanatics; the Puritans and Fifth-Monarchy men, and the Republicans, were his as well heart and soul. His opponents were the old Tory gentry and the whole body of the Roman Catholics of England. The court of profligates, sceptics, and panders trembled at a man whose mandate had just brought Lord Strafford to the scaffold; and Charles himself, amid all his heartlessness and fashionable philosophy, dreaded an ambition the more terrible because it was vague and undefined.

The crafty statesman of whom we speak was seated at a richly ornamented table that had been wheeled into a window-recess, turning over with earnest, contracted brow one of the numerous piles of papers, and occasionally allowing his eye to wander over the grey stones of the courtyard, which the window commanded; resting it

sometimes, with what seemed a half-restrained smile, on four cannon of large calibre that had been placed there under pretence of guarding his person during the first heat of the Popish plot, just a week after the discovery of the murdered body of Sir Edmond-bury Godfrey upon Primrose Hill.

“Such is ambition, the poets say,” he muttered half aloud, watching the sun already sinking behind the roofs, which cut black and sharp against its fading light. “Bah! what is ambition to the poet, a man who wants a shilling? whose only ambition is for a dinner. Men rail against ambition who never felt the appetite; one hour of this glory they might at least acknowledge is worth a dozen of tame noon-days. Who would trot along on a dull hackney who had the power to rein the fiery curvetings of a barb? Who would bathe in the stagnant horsepond of domestic life when he could buffet the tempest billows into subjection, and make them bear him like tame horses to the land where he would be.

Twenty years more of life," mused the statesman, feeling his pulse, with his watch in one hand and somewhat of the nervous eagerness of a valetudinarian, eyeing his thin wrist and shrunk hand, "say the physicians,—quacks and cheats, the whole of the crew, with their potable-gold, and life-elixirs. Well, say twenty years of life; in five more I will" (his voice sank till it became inaudible), "or rule him that wears one. One has been already in my grasp, and, fool that I was, I let it go because a satire bit me in the heel; now I am of stronger stuff. But enough of this. Let us see what the *Protestant Intelligencer* says to-day; or I'll take the *True News*, for the Catholic lies are really more plausible than those we manufacture."

Then, throwing himself back in his almost regal chair of crimson velvet, that was embroidered with arms and coronets,—for Shaftesbury, like many other ambitious men, loved to be surrounded by even the emblems of power,—he read earnestly for a few moments; then

took up some long lists of names and figures that lay on the table, and laughed aloud.

“ ‘Thirty thousand Jesuits dressed as pilgrims to start from Corunna for Wales.’ Very well conceived, prettily thought of; Sir Henry Griffith and all you Popish spluttering squires tremble over your toasted cheese and nappy ale. ‘A Roman Catholic banker’s threat to kill his Majesty’ (the heretical tyrant! yes, that’s the phrase) ‘overheard by Captain Dangerville at an ordinary near the Bishop of Durham’s house, Covent Garden.’ Ingenious fiction! ‘Three thousand’ (never less than thousands) ‘priests coming over as Dutch sailors, French merchants, and Jew pedlars; left St. Omer on the 10th.’ Inventive genius of Oates! But really I must let somebody warn the fellow to throw more probability into his stories, or the Papists will laugh us out of court. How I see Halifax laugh at that—the trimmer!—our Essex groan, and Godolphin bow and sneer! Now what does my Catholic friend

O. at the old story—‘The body of Mephibosheth and the soul of Shimei’? That’s rather too bitter; my friend with the elbows out must beware the cudgel, which is the best censor in these times, when the insolence of mankind can only be repressed by horsewhips or pistol-bullets.” Then, with the impetuosity of his nature, the old statesman rose feebly from his chair, and advancing a step or two to the folding-doors which led to his secretary’s room, called, “Mr. Locke, Mr. Locke.”

In a moment, calmly, with none of the hurry of the parasite and little of the obsequiousness of the courtier, the great philosopher, then still young, entered with a paper in his hand. This noble preacher of toleration was at this time residing in the house of his patron, serving occasionally as his private secretary, and educating the future author of the *Characteristics*. Contrary to the fashion of the times, he wore his own hair, which fell in soft flowing lines upon his shoulders, which were already slightly bent

by the incessant stooping of student-life. His features were bold; but a smile of great benevolence played about his mouth. His forehead was broad and round, his lips being niether thin and ascetic nor full and sensual; his chin was bold, and his head well set on his neck; his eyebrows were full and rather arched; his eyes bright and healthy, but somewhat cold; his complexion pale, but still clear and fresh. As for his costume, it was plain and almost puritanical, yet neat, and with nothing of the slovenliness of a pedant.

With an abstracted manner, the philosopher handed Shaftesbury the writing upon which he had been engaged.

“ ‘A few thoughts on innate ideas?’ This is not it, Mr. Locke.”

“I beg your lordship’s pardon, you have the wrong paper,” said the philosopher, with a smile at his own absence of mind; and stepping into the inner room, he returned in a moment with a pamphlet in which, by the direction of his patron, he had been attempt-

ing to rouse his calm nature to the violence of political diatribe. Shaftesbury ran his eye over it, and looked up with an air of vexation.

“Very good, Mr. Locke; worthy—and I say it without flattery—of your thoughtful and forgiving mind; but it wants the venom of personality. Take a lesson from Shadwell, and talk of the black patch on Arlington’s nose; or ridicule Lauderdale’s broad Scotch, and Hyde’s drunken furies. Throw fireworks among them, and spirt out the flame of true Protestant wrath, like Johnson. Make Halifax reading Machiavel and Plato alternately, and laugh at Sunderland’s wise silence. Don’t forget an allusion to Sardanapalus, and be sure to put in a eulogy of Queen Bess, to please the clubs. Call Monmouth the young Josiah, and finish off with allusions to the Inquisition and Smithfield. You use too tender colours; you must daub with red and blue, to catch the people.”

“Really, my lord,” said Locke, “this political writing is somewhat alien to a nature de-

voted to philosophical meditation, and now absorbed in abstractions on mental phenomena."

"Well, well, 'tis very well," answered Shaftesbury, glancing at the paper; "but it's too good for the readers. No one but silly Lord Coleraine feeds horses with cheesecakes. What think you of the plot; goes it not bravely, every clamour of the people now filling roundly the sails of the good ship Protestantism?"

"I will yield to no one, my lord, in abhorrence," replied the philosopher, looking grave and sorrowful, "of the intolerance and despotism of the Roman Pontiff; but I have no sympathy with that fellow Oates, who, however he may be treated by the mobile, seems to me, with due deference to your lordship, to be, after all, but a greasy villain. It was but last night that I met him on my way home from Monmouth Square; and he must needs link his arm in mine, and, all down Holborn, pour into my ear such loathsome, nay, blasphemous, expressions against her

Majesty the queen (and he once a minister of God), that I called quickly for a sedan and a link-boy, and hurried hither, not without some expressions of, I think, just indignation."

"Oates is not an apostle," said Shaftesbury, smiling at the unworldly anger of the philosopher, which, in this case, might have been attended with danger. "When the pot boils, the scum floats at the top. A less scrupulous man would be trodden under foot, my dear Mr. Locke, in such times as ours. If every one now has not his price, as the king's favourite adage runs, at least every virtue has its melting-point; for the purest there is some temptation or another, which is sailing in search of him, and will scuttle him one day at the first broadside. Every one sinks a mine now; and if you would not be sent prematurely to heaven in a blast of fire, you must mine deeper than your adversaries. When a ship is drifting on a lee-shore, and the sailors are drinking or at prayers, he surely deserves to be captain who first seizes the helm and drives

her back from a danger so desperate. I am that sailor ; Titus is my first mate ; I steer to a port—he works at the ropes and trims the sails. Since the throwing-out of the Exclusion Bill, the Protestant enthusiasm has been at blood-heat ; for every fat alderman imagines himself the peculiar object of Catholic hatred ; and Oates, who was lately beginning to sink in popular esteem, now struts and looks big, and mouths about ‘the plat’ more incessantly than ever. That defeat was better to us than a victory. But I have at hand a thing, Mr. Locke, that will be worse for James than twenty Exclusion Bills—a little black box—a petard, sir. But no more of that till the times are ripe. Then let gloomy Essex, supple Godolphin, pompous Temple, trimming Halifax, and ruffian Lauderdale tremble ; for the game is my own, and no man shall pluck it out of my hands.”

“Pardon me, my lord,” said Mr. Locke, with a grave voice, “if I say that I think

your text of Scripture ill placed side by side with your political argument."

"I honour your Christian philosophy," said Shaftesbury, who, though the leader of the English Protestant cause, like many statesmen of the day, was little better than a sceptic; "but I can scarcely allow the Scriptures to be more than an admirable code of moral doctrine, finer than Plato's, yet equally pointing to an unattainable ideal. But no more of that now. Is Mr. Dryden still working for court-pay? Has any piece of his appeared lately?"

"I hear," said Locke, "that a new piece of his is rehearsing at Dorset Gardens, in which his grace the Duke of Monmouth is sketched under the garb of the Duke of Guise."

"Let him beware another cudgelling from Rochester. I'll set the clubs at the play."

"Mr. Dryden writes with a divine energy," said Locke. "'Tis a pity that he has polluted his pen with obscenities worthy only of such de-

bauchees as the abandoned Sedley and the jester Killigrew."

"You have not a courtier's tongue," said Shaftesbury, "Mr. Locke; but what is less a loss, certainly not a courtier's heart; and yet I would rather almost live with such rakehells, noisy and witty, than with such heavy divines as Lord Russell, or that vehement stoic, Algernon Sidney, who would play the part of a London Cato, and deems us all Sybarites."

"At least he cannot be said to be imbued with the vices of the age," said Locke, slightly colouring as he remembered that Shaftesbury was himself of a profligate life; then, to hide his confusion—for his patron's equanimity was notoriously imperturbable—"Have you glanced your eye, my lord, over the Duchess of Newcastle's last book, *The World's Olio*, which I found on your table yesterday?"

"Mention not the name of that *femme savante*," said Shaftesbury, "that most wearisome of virtuous women, who, because she is

childless, takes to adopting books, and is always miserable for fear one should think she did not write them all herself; a lady who discusses everything, from astronomy to Greek. Why, she would ruin all the publishers in Little Britain."

"Her book is, indeed, a poor fanciful far-rago," said Locke, but seeking, with his usual amiability, to side with the minority; "yet, I dare assert, a very good wife—brave, prudent, and virtuous, and loving the memory of her gallant husband with a devotion that seems ridiculous to the painted sirens of Whitehall and the Park."

"Commend me to the sirens," said Shaftesbury, "rather than to such a ridiculous form of virtue. I fancy I see the good duchess at her morning levees, surrounded by spectacled virtuosi, with just sense enough to be the meanest of flatterers, and calling her their princess and the tenth Muse, while she proses over long stories of my Lord and Don John at Antwerp. The Royal Society, with all its

new bungling learning, occupies much of her time ; she is always inviting parties of people of quality to see a flea magnified into a river-horse, or to discuss the possibility of supplying London houses with bottled air from the Surrey Downs—Pshaw ! ”

As Shaftesbury was still anatomising the worthy duchess, with a slight sneer upon his lip, a servant entered the room, clad in the well-known orange and purple livery of his master, and presented him with a note.

CHAPTER IX.

THE INTRUDER.

LOOKING at the writing, with a slight contraction of the brow,—the greatest evidence of surprise that this practised man of the world ever allowed himself to show, even in his frankest moments,—Lord Shaftesbury asked who had left the letter.

The servant replied, it had been thrown to him when coming out of the Duke's Theatre that night by a lady in a vizard, who, whispering in his ear, "Bow,"—the agreed word of the night with his lordship's adherents,—drew the letter from her muff; when he replied, "Shaft," and slipped it into his sleeve.

“Did any one see its passage, sirrah?”

“Only one, my lord—a tall Cavalier in blue and silver, who then drew upon me, and demanded the billet.”

“You replied, of course, by running him through the liver?”

“I did, my lord.”

“And how escaped?”

“Ran back into the dressing-room of the theatre, spoke a few words to a young actress of my acquaintance, put on a black periwig and a dark cloak, and slipped out at the back-door into a sedan.”

“And there was no hue and cry?”

“Indeed was there, my lord. Some Hectors, seeing my livery of purple and yellow, called out, ‘Down with the Whigs!’ and drawing their swords, tried to break into the theatre; but a few City ‘prentices, mustering with their clubs, raised a shout of ‘Down with the Pope!’ and I left them all full tilt, fighting down Fleet Street,—the women running to the windows, the watch

ringing their bells, the Scourers turning out from the taverns, and the flambeau-men and hackney-coach drivers carrying off those that were the worst mauled."

"And all for this," said Shaftesbury, smiling, and holding up the little scented letter to Locke. "Jenner, you did well; for a first experiment in intrigue, the thing was not ill performed. You do right always to keep a back-door for retreat. Is the City up, think you?"

"Undoubtedly, my lord. Fleet Street was as full as a hive before my sedan got out of sight. If it had not been for a slight fee, the chairmen would have dropped me at the corner of Gracious Street; but I drew my sword, and drove them on; and when I left them at the gate, the quarrelsome rogues found out they were Whig and Tory, and fell by the ears about the fare."

"Upon which *Tribulation Barebottle* would immediately sing:

'How sweet a thing it is to see
Men dwell in pious unity!'

But these things are well ; they keep up the enthusiasm of the Protestant citizens, warm their blood, and rub the rust off the old toasting irons that have been sleeping over the chimneys ever since the ‘crowning mercy,’ as old Noll called it, at Worcester. But that last part of the story, Jenner, was, I see, judiciously put in, to remind your master that danger deserves reward. There’s a gold piece for you, to drink ‘Destruction to Popery’ in.”

“Is it not, my lord,” said Locke, with a sigh, as Jenner left the room with a low *congé*, “a somewhat pitiable sight to contemplate the universal divisions of these troublous and most unhappy times? Methinks I do sometimes wish for that ‘lone mossy cell’ that my friend Mr. Milton writes so sweetly of, and I long for a hermitage yet without crucifix or idol, where I might sit, afar from all the storms and fogs of political discord, and meditate on man’s nature and the ways of Providence.”

“I’ve never read Mr. Milton’s ‘Paradise Lost,’” said Shaftesbury. “But Statira tells me—and she has a sharp wit—that it’s too theological; and Roxana vows, with a pretty oath, that she had rather read one of Mr. Dryden’s comedies.”

“It is somewhat sectarian, my lord,” replied Locke, with more warmth than his calm and almost phlegmatic nature usually displayed, “as might be expected of one who was Latin secretary to the Lord Protector; and yet would even Mr. Sidney, who is somewhat of the heathen stoic, marvel to see an old blind man, a poor widower, tortured by disease, deserted by his children, with nothing but his pen and his organ to soothe him, discourse of the deepest mysteries of heaven, his face growing radiant as Stephen’s when he speaks of death.”

“Egad,” said Shaftesbury, “mind Mr. Locke, and send your old rhyming friend some money. I honour him for the rebuff he gave the Duke of York when he once asked him if he didn’t think

his blindness the visitation of God; and Mr. Milton answered, 'Just as your father's execution was.' I rejoice to think how Rochester must have laughed out, Lauderdale have threatened the old Nonconformist with the Gatehouse, and James looked black and foolish. My time gives me little leisure for such reading; but do the wits not say that Mr. Cowley, in his 'Davideis,' has far transcended the old sour schoolmaster's work?"

"Men who prefer Killigrew's 'Parson's Wedding,' with its foolish and somewhat obscene jesting, to William Shakspeare's 'Twelfth Night,' may justly acknowledge such a preference. But the one is a Jew's-harp, the other the harp of the great Jew king David."

"Well, well, your opinion against the fops for a ducat, Mr. Locke; but do not talk of Shakspeare, who although full of genius, as I remember at college, when I acted in one of his plays, reads, I hold, better in that foul-tongued knave Dryden's *réchauffés*. His wit is

hardly airy enough for our French taste, and is rather scholastic, involved, stale, and ponderous. For my part, give me Molière."

"Monsieur Molière is given to buffoonery, and doth savour in his merriest scenes somewhat of the jack-pudding."

"True, true," said Shaftesbury, with an abstracted air, as if his mind had already wandered back into politics, looking again at the letter, then turning his eye to the ceiling. "Look at that," he said, "Mr. Locke," pushing it into the philosopher's hand.

Locke read half aloud: "'Light of my life, 200 tells me to-day in Spring Gardens that it is certainly reported at 50 that A 1 intends to summon the two Houses on the 20th.' Really, my lord," he said, "this cipher is to me a shibboleth, although I make much use in my studies of the still more facile brachygraphy."

"I had forgot you did not know all our ciphers. Well, the purport is this—and it comes from a hand that may be depended

upon, for old Rowley's secrets are easily procurable, by money or love—the king has ventured, in defiance of my power, to summon a Parliament for the 20th. He forgets how near Guildhall and Whitehall are, and is ignorant of the great engine I can set in motion. The Restoration changed our rulers, but left the people still unchanged. All goes on well. The Duke of Monmouth arrives at midnight on the 19th; a public procession shall receive him; their shouts shall shake the very palace, making James tremble and Lauderdale bully and swear. This strong demonstration of popular feeling will keep the restless Sunderland with the country party, and frighten the waverers. You, Mr. Locke, must write an address to the citizens, and reply to the court-papers; fill it with allusions to the young champion of the true religion and the rightful heir to the British throne. Speak of his handsome person, winning manners, and zeal for Protestantism; recount his deeds in the

Low Countries; and hint at the *Black Box* (which people are so full of) some day turning up to clear his legitimacy. Ask if William the Bastard was the worse king because his birth was not pure; and conclude by saying that, this one defect removed, no true Englishman could doubt on whose head to place the crown, unless he wishes to see the unhappy kingdom thrown as a mere offering at the foot of the abomination of the Seven Hills."

As Locke was busily noting down the heads of his intended pamphlet, a richly-dressed black page, wearing armlets of gold, entered, and begged Mr. Locke to come to Missus Roxana, who wanted his help (so the badly-spelt note ran, in the fantastic French jargon of the day) to inhale the *fraicheur* of the evening breeze, "and aid her in penning a *rondeau*."

"Which means to write it for her," said Shaftesbury, smiling.

Before Mr. Locke, with a sigh of regret,

had had well time to put away his papers, a French valet entered on his tiptoes, and said—

“Monsieur Locke, my lady expect-a you in the Blue Chambre.”

As he was on the point of quitting the room, the shout of an approaching mob arrested the nobleman’s attention.

“Mr. Locke,” said the earl, “my side is troublesome to-night. Will you oblige me by opening the window, and listening in what direction those sounds are coming? The city seems restless.”

“The sound,” said Mr. Locke, as he drew up the rich satin curtains from the window, and put out his head to listen, “comes from Cheapside, and seems—for the wind blows towards us—to be moving rapidly in the direction of Aldersgate.”

“It is like the cry of my Dorsetshire hounds,” said Shaftesbury, his eye kindling in the excitement of the moment. “Now I cannot hear it at all—it seems as far off

as Temple Bar—now it ceases altogether. The watch have beaten them all home, the cowardly boobies—ah! was that a shout again? Yes—again—the brisk boys—that’ll shake Whitehall! To it again! Shout as if you were calling from steeple to steeple! I should be amongst them now: a speech at this crisis from a balcony might have a marked effect. Mr. Locke, ring the bell; bid them bring me my sword and cane, and order the chair. Mind—your Mr. Wilson I shall employ.”

“What bearers, my lord?” said Jenner, who slid in noiselessly and swiftly. “Tom and ambling Harry? They are stout fellows, and accustomed to shoulder a crowd—the same that used to take your lordship to the Privy Council. But I think, my lord, the mob works this way; for their cry I hear is, ‘To Lord Shaftesbury’s!—to Lord Shaftesbury’s!’ Believing it to be your lordship’s wish, perhaps, to address them, I sent out three of your stoutest-lunged fellows to raise this cry.”

“And here come the brave Protestants,” said Shaftesbury; at that moment a roar of voices broke out into a shout, and a broad glare of light on the opposite house-fronts indicated the approach of a mob bearing torches and flags, and uttering discordant cries.

The next moment the heavy knocker of the courtyard gate was heard thundering to the accompaniment of a thousand impatient clubsticks. The earl could see a dozen of his servants running to open it; before they could well throw them back, a dark tide of apprentices, citizens, and rabble rushed in and filled the court. The foremost ringleaders, halting under the window, clamoured loudly for the Protestant earl. At first they mistook Mr. Locke for their idol, and saluted him with acclamations, tossing up their hats, waving their flaring torches, and shaking their sticks. Alarmed at this unexpected and sudden popularity, the shy philosopher retired from the window, and assisted the earl

from his chair. But the valetudinarian had forgotten disease and infirmity. His tread was now firm and bold, his bearing dignified, as he advanced to the window, and bowed three times to the multitude.

It was an impressive scene—the dark sea of heads and upturned shouting faces, all reddened by the light of the torches, as if with the glare of a great conflagration. Many of the more turbulent had bloody rags tied round their heads, or had slung embroidered swordbelts, torn from beaten adversaries, round their own brawny, half-naked chests; others waved broken swords or watchmen's poles. At every word of the earl the populace bowed, and rolled like a sea after a storm; and the torch-waving and bell-ringing commenced with increased fury. "No Popery!" "Down with the Pope!" "The Protestant succession!" were the cries. "Three cheers for the friend of the people!" "Three cheers for the Duke of Monmouth!"

“Way for his holiness!” cried the mob, as four stalwart draymen, wearing the broad leather aprons of their order, staggered forward, amid hisses and laughter, bearing an effigy of the Pope, crowned and robed, and sitting on a sort of pontifical throne.

“He should go home to Whitehall, not come to Thanet House,” said a Protestant wig-maker, who was conspicuously dressed in the orange scarf and orange shoulder-knot of his party.

“He’s thrown out the Exclusion Bill,” said another, “and is going back to Rome by the earliest conveyance.”

“I’ll scull him for nothing,” said a waterman.

“Send every cut-throat fasting Jesuit with him,” said a butcher in a red nightcap; “for they’re a bad lot, flesh and bone.”

A tremendous blow of a drunken ‘prentice’s cudgel ended the question of the Pope’s journey by smashing his representa-

tive, the mob joining in the demolition. In five minutes the effigy and its robes were torn into innumerable relics. The earl now addressed a few artful words to the mob, apparently intended to quiet their fears, but in reality still more exciting their apprehension by mysterious hints of royal plots, a *black box*, &c., and at the same time taking care to inform them of the constant watch which he kept over the safety of Protestantism.

The crowd had all passed away, and the gates of Thanet House were closing for the night, when the three footmen who were engaged in the barring and bolting observed a sailor leaning with folded arms against a wall. He had a wooden leg, and a heavy cutlass hung by his side.

“Now, old Sir Simon the king—now, my old Tarpauling,” cried the footman, “it is time for you to trip your anchor, for we’re going to shut the dock gates.”

The sailor said nothing, but turned up his

coat sleeves—he had evidently drunk more than enough—and only replied by shouting a scrap of a sea song :

“Here’s to thee, tarry Tom,
Now here’s a good health to the king ;
While the larboard man shall drink,
Let the starboard lubber sing.”

“Where’s the commodore ? I’ve got a message for the commodore.”

“The earl admits no one after dark.”

“What !—not a true Protestant sailor, who helped to burn down Panama, and has many a dozen times flown at a d—— Spaniard’s throat ?”

“There, it’s no use, my man,” said the strongest of the footmen, growing impatient at the seaman’s impudent leer of defiance, and seeing him prepare to light a pipe, “you must go at once.”

“Pay the shot out of that,” said the sailor, as he stumped furiously forward, and, as the footman laid his hand on his collar, felled him at a blow—“pay the shot out of that, and never mind the change.”

“Are you mad?” said the men, rushing up to intercept his passage to the house.

“Lookee here. My name is Tom Rogers, and I’m steel to the backbone. I see the captain up there on the quarterdeck, and I mean to overhaul him. Stand off!” then drawing his cutlass, and swinging it round him to keep off the varlets, who eyed him as one would a bear that has once squeezed him, he stoutly stumped backward upstairs, singing, at the pitch of a loud and not very smooth voice—

“Here’s a health to the coxswain, Will,
Thou old Truepenny still;
While the one rogue tosses it off,
The other can froth and fill.”

“Servant, commodore. My name,” said the sailor, as he entered the room where the earl was sitting, “is Tom Rogers, steel to the backbone, and captain of *The Englishman’s Revenge*.”

“What do you want, fellow?” said the earl, sternly, turning an angry eye on his undaunted visitor, who was coolly locking the

door to prevent interruption from his assistants.

"You needn't look so scared, commodore; Tom Rogers is no cut-throat; it's all plain and above board here."

"Do you bring a message from Sir Roger Wildfire?" said the earl.

"Avast there, commodore; none of your tricks with Tom Rogers. Not 'xactly; and yet it is, too, about Sir Roger. Our admiral has sent me to you with a flag of truce to offer you a black box for sale, containing a certain paper, for which he wants 5000 pistoles, or he'll surrender it to the enemy."

Shaftesbury's countenance wore an expression of angry inquiry.

"We stopped the *Saucy Jane* between Calais and Dover; for the admiral, as you may have heard, is on his way here to answer charges against him from those cursed Don Spaniards; and he thought Sir Roger's vessel might pay his travelling expenses."

"Villain, you did not kill Sir Roger?"

"Lord love you, commodore, we weren't a-going for to do that. Zounds, we kill nothing but Spaniards. He is all right, all ship-shape, and will be here in a day or two."

"Surrender that box," said the earl, rising from his seat, and drawing his sword to rush on the pirate.

"Hands off," said the captain, drawing a pistol from his pocket, "or the consequences may be unpleasant. I don't carry the box about with me. Tom Rogers isn't such a fool as that."

"Help, break open the door!" cried the earl; and the door began to bend with the force of the pressure.

Tom Rogers' decision was quickly come to. Drawing his cutlass, he parried the earl's thrust; and disarming Shaftesbury, held a pistol to his head, declaring he would fire if the earl did not secure him a safe retreat.

CHAPTER X.

THE RAKE'S LEVEE.

IT is a week since the *Saucy Jane* was boarded by the unceremonious abstractor of the Little Black Box; and Wildfire has returned, and reported to Shaftesbury the unfortunate result of his mission. He has bound himself to recover it, and his fertile brain has devised a notable scheme for that object.—But of that anon. We must now introduce him to our readers in his own fashionable house in Covent Garden, where a short description of his morning levee will be the best means we have at hand for painting his versatile character.

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It was nearly the noon of a capricious April sort of day when Sir Roger Wildfire awoke with a start, as a swift shaft of misty gold shot through a thin chink in the shutters of his town mansion, and fell warm and reprovingly on his pillow. In a moment, for though indolent he was impulsive, like all his race—he rubbed his eyes once, yawned twice, and, leaping out of bed, slipped on an Indian morning-gown. The angry tingle of a little silver bell that he snatched from the dressing-table brought no attendant, nor did the second or the third; at a fourth, however, distant steps were heard, a small door leading out upon a staircase flew open, and Millefleur, the valet, entered with many *congés*, and an affected mincing gait between that of a barber and a waiter; at that moment, as if to anticipate his question, the clock on the mantelpiece struck twelve.

“A pretty hour this for a gentleman to wake; and I, a fellow deep in two plots and half a dozen love-affairs, with

a horse-race and several duels impending. Why, what detained you, Millefleur? Egad, I thought you had taken me for plague-stricken, daubed a red cross on the door, sealed up everything not portable, and absconded with the plate for fear of infection."

"Does your worship want particularly to know?" said Millefleur, bending his head with the wheedling air of an old servant who knows he will be forgiven.

"His worship (but don't call me that frightful country name again) does wish particularly to know."

"I and Monsieur Dortolan, the French cook, were engaged, sir, in a game at ombre. Monsieur had ace, knave, and king. I played the three of diamonds, then—"

"Oh, no more of that, Millefleur. Open the shutters, for I don't like this golden midnight, as some one calls it."

Millefleur threw open the shutters; and a flood of light broke in sudden and silent, as if the sunbeams had been waiting outside, eager

for admittance, and now poured in like water from a broken dam.

“Curse this headache. Where was I last night, Millefleur? Half my days are spent in questions as to what we did yesterday. Plague on these qualms! Bring me a cup of spirit of clary, and then the chocolate. But, egad, if I waste my days, I make the most of my nights; and old Bacon himself could not reprove me for often chilling my blood with early rising. Millefleur, didn’t I ask you, sirrah, how I spent last night?—for my memory, exercising a very sound discretion, positively refuses just now to remember any of my foolish actions.”

“The early part of the evening, sir, we spent at the ‘Rose,’ at cards—ombre and spadille. And may I ask your honour what sort of a hand you held in that second disputed game?”

“Curse your impudence! Go on. After that?”

“The concluding part of the night ter-

minated in a fray at the 'Fleece.' You headed a party of Scourers, and were attacked by the watch, who tried to carry you to the round-house. You first routed the watch; then, aided by some chance gentlemen of your acquaintance, drove off the Scourers, who grew troublesome, and had insisted on taking you on their shoulders to a tavern, and crowning you Prince of Scavengers."

To this recital Sir Roger had been listening with the utmost affected gravity.

"Were any of the gallant bullies hurt?"

"Not much. One was scored with a quarter-staff, and another had his skull cracked with a halberd; but beyond that nothing—Oh, yes, one of the watch was pricked a little, and bled like a pig."

"So much the better; these corpulent watchmen are only kept from apoplexy by such timely bleeding. Stop a moment. Ah, now I remember; my head is still full of the noise of fiddles, the glare of flambeaux, cries of 'Follow, follow!' 'Knock 'em down!'

‘Scour, scour!’ the rattle of dice, the jingle of glasses, and the clatter of broken windows. Millefleur, now, on your word, was I tipsy?”

“You were very courageous, sir. I don’t know what tipsy is; is it the new word for being drunk.”

“Yes.”

“Ah, then you were decidedly tipsy.”

During this conversation, which may convey some impression of a fashionable gentleman’s recreations at this period, Sir Roger had been languidly dressing. He now, as Millefleur handed him his coat fluttering with ribbons, dived his hand into the pockets and brought out a handful of miscellaneous contents—four torn cards, two dice, three sonnets, a love-letter, and the stand of a wine-glass. A loud noise of voices, as if quarrelling, was at this moment heard proceeding from a distant room, which was connected with the bed-chamber by a passage and folding-doors.

“What in this enlightened universe is that,

Millefleur? Is there any one awaiting me? This is not my levee-morning, I think?"

"Parbleu," said Millefleur, with a pitying shrug, "only some dozen or so vulgar creatures since eight o'clock. Those are the duns fighting for the nearest place to the door. The petitioners are always quiet and respectful—till they've got what they want."

"Millefleur, give me my periwig—On further consideration, wait a bit. Who of my creditors are there? Monsieur Redingote, the French tailor?—Monsieur Cologne, the perfumer?"

"Yes, sir, they were there first, sir—ten minutes past eight. It's now half-past twelve."

"'The magnanimity of great men is most conspicuous on occasions of peculiar emergency;' so says Plutarch, and I think the old put was right for once."

With this classic axiom, Wildfire, who had for some minutes been shaking his bald head at Millefleur, who was lazily scenting an

ample blonde periwig with richly-scented pulvil, put on the peruke, and adjusted it in a mirror, while his servant arranged his rich lace collar.

“Goddess of Invention, how shall I scare these intrusive vermin? Shall I advance, Millefleur, like a newly-arisen Apollo, tossing my ambrosial hair, and casting on them glances of benignity, melt them into gentleness by the Orphean sweetness of my voice? Pah! the fustian rascals are never gentle but when you buy and when you settle—between those poles eternal winter reigns. Egad, I have it! I send word by you that the burning coal, or inflammatory imposthume, has broken out in my throat, and I have been given over by three physicians—say, four physicians? At that moment, as they stand flocking together, pale, aghast, and uncertain, I will rush in in my nightgown, with a bandage round my head, and the dispersion of the armada will be complete.”

A few moments after this apostrophe the

doors of the ante-room were thrown open with a crash ; the angry buzz of various vexed and impatient men subsided into a scarcely audible murmur as Sir Roger Wildfire entered on tip-toe, his cane swinging from his wrist, benignly smiling, examining a silver pouncet-box he held in one hand, and scarcely heeding the numerous letters, petitions, and bills that were pressed into his hand.

At the same instant fourteen nervous tradesmen presented their accounts, two pages knelt at his feet with scented billets on coloured paper, and one turbulent-looking fellow, with a scarred face, offered him a cartel on the point of his sword.

“ Millefleur,” said Sir Roger, in a tone of exhaustion, “ burn some Portugal sweets—the smell of these bills is offensive—and put some orange-flower water on my handkerchief. Take these two billets, and send in return those two madrigals I wrote yesterday—one on my lady’s fan, and the other on her breast-knot. Who are you ?” he said, as he pushed

aside a dozen hands, until he reached an ill-looking fellow in a rug gown, one eye tied up with a bit of dirty red scarf, and his arm in a sling.

“The honest watchman your worship pinked last night, when you and Sir Charles, and one or two other madcaps, scoured the Mitre. Three pints and a gill of blood I’ve lost, as I’m an honest, sober watchman.”

“To be honest and sober at once is an impossibility,” drawled Sir Walter; “so no more of that. How did I do it? Was it a good lunge, well put in?”

“Extraordinarily well put in,” said the watchman. “I had just said to Jack—that’s John Wiggings—‘Knock ’em down!’ and lifted my quarter-staff, shifting my right hand so, when ‘Scour,’ says you, throwing your wig in my face, and whips me through the shoulder.”

“Well, here’s a smelt, as they say in Alsatia; take this twenty-shilling piece and vanish — depart! Away to Mr. Wilkins,

the Templar, whom I saw at the edge of the fray, and declare you were hurt by one of his party, as you were. He would give a guinea to say he pinked a watchman, for he once carried his arm for a week in a sling, and said he had been hacked in trying to pump on a tip-staff in the Friars. There, no thanks, or next time we meet I'll run you through the vitals. As for your master," he said, turning to the bully with the cartel, which he first skimmed his eye over, "tell him, in reply to his polite invitation to come to Chelsea to slit his windpipe, that I never fight with dicers or Friarsmen; let him keep his valour to drive bailiffs out of the Sanctuary, his sword for slitting noses or frightening tame citizens who've lent him money. No vapouring, sir—begone!"

CHAPTER XI.

DISPERSING THE ARMADA.

“Now, gentlemen,” said Sir Roger to the tradesmen, “having cleared off that business, let me know your errands.”

“Feathers”—“Sword-belt”—“Pistols”—“Rapiers”—“Perfume”—“Horses,” broke from the noisy crowd.

“Friends, countrymen, and debtors! you come to worry Cæsar, not to hear him. My time being much engaged, partly at court and partly in literature—Millefleur, tell them what I mean.”

So saying, Wildfire threw himself into a chair, and began, as was the fashion for gentlemen in moments of repose, to comb his scented wig.

One fat citizen began to cough ; another, a saddler, thought the smell enough to “pisen ye ;” and his neighbour, a thin stable-keeper, agreed with him.

“ Sir Roger Wildfire,” said Millefleur, with all the dignity of a herald, “ my friends, offers you five hundred—”

“ Five hundred !” said the crowd, and every one looked and smiled at the other, while a buzz of approbation went round.

“ Five hundred apologies !” Every face fell. “ And being compelled to start almost immediately for Hampton Court, requests that half of the gentlemen present will call to-morrow.”

“ Which half ? ” cried the crowd.

“ The weakest half.”

In a moment the crowd broke into two parts with almost military exactness, and fell upon each other. Bands were torn, coats pulled off ; but at last, with much jostling and noise, the weaker half were driven out, and the doors bolted. Shaking themselves

like gamecocks after a fight, smiling and arranging their bills, the victorious combatants then drew up in a semicircle around Sir Roger, who had thrown himself with graceful negligence into a royal chair, all crimson velvet and gilding. The joiner who supplied that chair, emboldened by the sight, fell on his knees, and presented his bill, which he flung out before him like a roll of stair-carpet.

“Monsieur,” cried a small weak voice through the keyhole, “that very Marischal powder on your periwig is from my—”

“Shop,” he would have said ; but at that moment the door flew open, a fat saddler kicked the complainant downstairs, and came back rubbing his hands to join the crowd ; a courtier and a parasite was he in the worst form, and yet at home a great denouncer of the court that supported him.

“Sir Roger being anxious to settle,” continued Millefleur.

“Settle !” the crowd murmured approvingly.

“Everything amicably, desires me to bid you all leave the house within the space of ten minutes, or he will be compelled to drive you out at the point of the sword, being much distressed in his mind by the sudden and alarming illness of his butler, who has just sickened of a very malignant fever, which five physicians have pronounced—”

“Epydemitous,” nodded Sir Roger, yawning, eyeing the buckle upon his shoe, and swinging the clouded cane that hung at his wrist.

“And decidedly infectious—”

“Decidedly and fatally infectious,” chimed in Sir Roger, looking hard at the ceiling. “If, however, any gentleman will wait till I get the butler’s account-books, fumigate them, and pass them through hot vinegar—”

With horrified faces, pale lips, and stammering voices, the creditors replied in a chorus that they would call again in a few days. The thinnest and the most timid sneaked out first, scarcely stopping to bow,

and shunning the very wall as a man does a new-painted fence ; some holding their breath for fear of inhaling the malaria, others covering their mouths with the broad brims of their hats. A few of the sturdier still attempted to speak ; but becoming at last infected by the prevailing fear, backed out, and were heard stumbling down the staircase as fast as if their own creditors were at their heels.

The room fairly cleared, Sir Roger threw himself back in his chair, having first adjusted his periwig in the chimney-glass, and gave way to uncontrollable laughter, in which Millefleur joined, in a lower tone and at some distance.

“ Cross-bitten the whole gang, egad, and one or two killed with sheer fright. That Puritan saddler will go home and drown himself in his neighbour the currier’s tan-pit. Rupert himself never drove the sour citizens away faster. Millefleur, now sprinkle the room with some orange-water, and bring breakfast ; for I go to the Mulberry Garden at four to meet

Chloe, and the evening I spend at the Groom Porters."

Sir Roger was nibbling at a piece of toast—for his last night's debauch had not left him much appetite—when a servant threw open the door, and announced Mr. William Troutbeck.

Wildfire and Troutbeck were foster-brothers in friendship. They had starved together on a roll and an egg a-day in Paris, had fought side by side in Hungary, and had now learned in London to pace the Mall, match each other at bowls, tennis, crimp, tric-trac, and primero, and bet on each other's horses at Newmarket. Troutbeck was of a stronger and stouter build than his somewhat effeminate friend, and his cheek still wore a rich country flush of health, that even Lockett's claret and brawls at the "Rose" had not yet paled; his moustache terminated in crisp golden threads, and the somewhat darker hair of his head had been replaced by a fair periwig, which hung down on his shoulders.

“Wildfire, my friend,” he said, when they had cordially shaken hands, “court air does not agree with me; I go back to my country-seat next week, to forget intrigue, scouring, and the bottle, and devote my time to—”

“Dogs, hawks, and horses.”

“Your raillery I expected; but this I have observed,—round all great buildings, not excepting palaces, there circulates a strong current of air, as at most seasons of the year round Whitehall; this is apt to blow up sometimes into a dangerous tempest.”

“Most oracular. But you will never, man, go and marry some country squire’s daughter, who can do nothing but make clotted cream and distil *aqua mirabilis*; turn justice of the peace, forsooth, and spend long evenings making drenches for your horse and studying Markham’s ‘Farriery?’ What, grow fat, and sing ‘The king shall enjoy his own again’ at session-dinners, and tell long stories of old Rowley’s escapes and the Boscobel Oak! No, no, Troutbeck. Now, listen: I’ve three

matches to be run to-morrow at the Hay-market, and I'll bet money on every one of them. I'll hold you six to four on my gelding against the brown mare, gold and silver on the bay against the roan, and an even fifty on the chestnut against the black filly. No? why, then, I have lost all faith in you, and see a

'change

Into something new and strange.'

In one year you'll be telling dull stories like this. After the third bottle, unbuttoning your coat, you will look vacantly into the fat magistrate's fishy eyes on your right hand; and laying hold of him by the button-hole, you'll say: 'That dog, sir' (here you hiccough), 'I christened myself. I'm that dog's grandfather—godfather, I mean—(Pass the bottle); his name, sir, is Jowler: Jowler's father's was Ringwood, and his mother's Venus—(No heel-taps). His brother Music's the best dog in the county at a cold scent—(The bottle, there);—he'll make it out, sir, when every

other dog is puzzled. I'll bet you ten merry guineas he's never at a loss. Jowler's grandfather Dewlap was own cousin to his Majesty's staghound Rapid.' Thus you'll grow fatter and stupider, till death comes to relieve the world of a bore so intolerable."

"Bah! Wildfire, hear me."

"Your wife," ran on the wit, "will spend her time in brewing herb-drinks for the poor, starving the parish doctor, and destroying his patients; your own time will be equally divided between the kennel and the stable. In ten years you will grow tired of ruling at sessions and dominating in the hunting-field, and will return to court, though unfit to appear there; your gait awkward, your step heavy, the dance, the jest forgotten. But now, in all confidence, what produces this change? Has Rowley frowned on you, or Buckingham looked askance? Has Killigrew cut a joke upon the shape of your sword-hilt, or have you hit his Majesty's shins at tennis? I always observe when a man has been slighted

at court, he takes a sudden liking to country air. But what is life, man, without the Mall and the Ring, the theatre and the ‘Rose?’”

In five minutes from this time the two friends had parted, and Wildfire had strolled into a tavern-door near the Mulberry Gardens at Charing Cross. There was a deafening noise ; but amid all the laughing, singing, and jingling of cups and tankards, the cries of “Anon, sir,” still used as in the days of Bardolph ; and the shouts of “Score a pint of claret in the Dragon,”—Wildfire’s eyes fell at once, as a hawk spies out his prey, on a group seated at cards in a distant corner of the room.

These were some half-dozen sharpers, evidently engaged in plundering a young country gentleman, who, by his blue-feathered hat and rich sword-belt, seemed to be as full of money as the greediest rook about town could desire. He had hitherto been allowed to win, and, in high spirits at his run of

fortune, was counting the pile of gold—twenty-shilling pieces — that stood at his elbow. As he bent his head, Wildfire observed the gang, who had affected to be strangers to each other, exchange signs. In his chief friend and adviser, who was now playing against the unhappy fool, Wildfire at once detected the Scourer who had sent him the invitation to Chelsea fields. Drawing his hat over his eyes to prevent recognition, he strolled up the room, and mingling with the bystanders, watched the game more from pity at the gull's fate than from mere curiosity.

The young gallant—a Mr. Lascelles—at this moment, affecting to search for his pocket-handkerchief, pulled half a dozen billets from his pocket.

“Plague on the things!” he lisped; “but ladies will write to me. Last night, i’facks, I played a game at backgammon with Lord Coleraine, five up for half a-piece. Of the first set, I had three for love, and lost it. In the second, I began by throwing doub-

lets; he threw ace; then I threw size cinque next, soon filled up my tables, and had won by odd men; yet, upon my sincerity, at last I lost that too."

"Pull away, boys. Come aloft, say I," broke in the sharper who was his sworn adviser; "and when we've played out these six games, and you have given us our revenge, sir, then for a ragout at Chateline's; for, 'pon my reputation, the noise here, the smell of tobacco, and all together, is too much for my head; it makes my hand unsteady and my play uncertain."

"The place is full of nothing—stap my vitals!" replied the youth, with a silly laugh and a look of admiration at his adviser—"but old pests in buff coats and slouching boots, who deafen you with stories of all the wars from Edgehill to Brentford, and who sit and drink and swear at Oliver, as if they did not believe he was really dead."

During this conversation, Wildfire noticed that under the left arm of the bully lay the

bright steel handle of his rapier, which reflected in miniature, but clearly enough for a keen eye, the cards of the next player. The tide was turning rapidly in his favour; the pile of gold pieces was melting like snow-heaps in a thaw.

“What a scour we had last night down Fleet Street!” said the gull, talking louder and noisier to hide his anxiety; for this was not the first of his losses, and the oaks of his ancestral avenues were already shaking to their fall. “We rubbed out all the milk-scores from St. Dunstan’s to Ludgate, knocked down ten apple-stalls, twisted off six knockers, and carried off three signs. We’re the midnight boys to do it.”

The run of luck now turned for a deal or so, and each time he won. Wildfire observed that the youth, in the excitement of the moment, always snatched up the winning card and thrust it in his breast-pocket. The gamester seemed accustomed to such evidences of excitement, and played cooler and more warily. They

now gave up ombre, and at their victim's own request began to play at gleeek and primero. As, plied with wine, and constantly toasting various ladies by name, the gull grew blinder, Wildfire observed the bully slip the fool's ace of spades under his open hand, that lay flat on the table, and cover it, unobserved by even his confederates. At that moment, Wildfire, who had silently unsheathed his sword, and held it perpendicularly reversed, nailed the bully's hand with it to the table. At his shriek, his companions leaped from their seats, flung down their cards, and threw aside their dice; some pocketing them, thinking the bailiffs or the watch had arrived.

"Gentlemen, I pray you to be seated," said Wildfire, bowing and taking off his hat with his right hand. "If this gentleman has not the winning ace of spades hid under his palm, I beg him a hundred thousand pardons."

The bully scowled, bit his lips with rage and pain, but did not utter a word. The

gull gaped with astonishment, his head being now rather giddy with the wine; and he stood alternately looking at his cards, at Wildfire, and at his unfortunate friend, who sat with his bleeding hand nailed to the table like a specimen in a museum.

"I beg all gentlemen to bear witness that this fellow is a convicted cheat," said Wildfire. "Behold!" then drawing out his sword, and wiping it on the ruffian's shoulder, the card, now dyed crimson, was at once exposed.

"A cheat, a Whitefriars cheat!" stammered the victim, our old friend, Tom Chambers; "I demand back my pieces."

"The affair is a mistake," groaned the bully; "some unfortunate misunderstanding."

At the very thought of returning money, the five sharpers flashed out their swords, and crying "Scour, Scour!" advanced at once upon Wildfire. He, stepping behind a table, with the utmost composure took off his wig, and deposited it on a hat-peg; then, looking

round to see what support he might expect, he stood upon the defensive, putting his back against the door to prevent the egress of the bully, who, with his hand wrapped up in a napkin, was now thinking of retreat, having first swept the table of all the remaining coins.

The cries of "Part 'em, part 'em!" had roused a group of old cavalier soldiers, who had been falling out about which had been nearest hanging during the Protectorate; a dispute which had been settled by the wit of the party—a red-nosed fellow, who had taken Noll's colours at Edgehill—declaring they had all deserved hanging, and, believing they would all die by the rope still, if they had patience, offered to fight them round for a brace of crowns.

Beating up the combatants' swords, this sturdy arbitrator, with a volley of oaths, inquired the cause of the quarrel.

The gull, who had sidled up to Wild-fire, being assured over and over again

that he had fallen into a band of thieves, drew out his sword and joined the weaker party.

“Draw out your porkers, and fight for the rhino!” cried the wounded bully, groaning with pain, and using the slang of Alsatia.

“Gad-a-mercy,” said the gull, “what bloodthirsty rogues!”

“The game was fair enough,” grumbled the first swordsman, “and we never used the doctor (false dice). If a gentleman lose the smelts honestly, why must he whip out his tilter? If a decus or so would make it up, I and my friends would—”

“Down with the rogues!” said the cavalier, driving them before him, knocking down one with a blow from a heavy pewter tankard, and sending another headlong over a form. “Who are you, sir?” he said, as he turned quickly, and saw the country gentleman still irresolute, while Wildfire was exchanging passes with two of the gamblers, one of

whom he ran through the shoulder, while the other kept him at bay with a brandished chair.

“Why, Gad-a-mercy, sir,” said the gull, “I’m the gentleman you are all fighting about. I had, you see, sir, a knave of clubs—”

“Odsfoot, man, then use your bilboa, if it is only for show.”

“My dear sir, a thousand thanks,” said the victim. “Will you accept the celebrated gamecock Nutmeg as a small token of my gratitude, and come and see me at my seat at Broadmere? Nutmeg is just backed to fight Lord Wilmot’s Jackanapes and Tom Osborne’s Duckwing for 50*l.*; but, Gad-a-mercy, that’s all one. It’ll fight with Red Rose, who is his cousin once removed.”

“Delighted to deliver so gallant a young gentleman,” said Wildfire; “I require no further reward than the happy consciousness of rectitude. Sir, I have not the barbarity to tear Nutmeg from those arms.”

“Zounds, if he had a little more of Nut-

meg's mettle it would be no harm," said the Cavalier in Wildfire's ear, as the latter gentleman carefully put on his wig and combed it with much anxiety. "You let the fool off too easy. Mr. What's-your-name, I shall be delighted to accept Nutmeg. I love a main of cocks, Welsh main—anything—as well as any man in London, pick it over."

"Eh? What? Yes," stammered the gull. "The fight comes off to-morrow, and Tuesday I go to the Bull Ring to see the Irish butcher meet the Groom Porters' coachman at back-sword; on Wednesday I run my trotting-horse—"

"You're a poltroon, sir," said the Cavalier, stamping his foot, "and grudge your brave deliverers the just reward of their valour. Draw, sir."

"There, there; no more about it. Nutmeg shall be waiting for you here to-morrow, at two, gentlemen. A good morning;" and the mean, cowardly prodigal backed out of the room.

“What made you ask for Nutmeg?” said Wildfire.

“Only to try the depth of a fool’s gratitude,” said the Cavalier, sheathing his sword. Then, stepping up to the table, and calling for a hammer and a nail, the stranger fastened up the bloody card over the mantelpiece as a warning to sharpers.

“The fellow deserved it for being detected—the greatest crime in Whitefriars. Do you think that fool was thankful to you, sir, for saving him from his plunderers? Not a whit. He would rather have been cheated than proved a gull.”

“But, then, there is the duty we owe to society.”

“Mere excuse, sir, for pride. You were glad to show your power by exposing a rogue. Don’t put this down among your good deeds.”

“I never saw the carnal weapon used so discreetly,” said a Puritan bystander.

CHAPTER XII.

SIR ROBERT AT COURT.

THE licentiousness of Charles II.'s court has been overrated by those who draw almost their sole impressions of it from the memoirs of that sneering, gay voluptuary, Anthony Hamilton, Count de Grammont.

The ulcer of vice was on the brow of England; but the life-blood at her heart was still untainted. The land in which Izaak Walton was a citizen and Evelyn a gentleman was still sound at the core. The corruption was that of individual natures, not of the race in general. Locke and Newton, Baxter and Bunyan, were contemporaries of

Rochester and Buckingham; the Duchess of Portsmouth and Lady Russell inhabited the same city. At the time of which we write, Barrow was not long dead, and Tillotson was still preaching; while Sherlock and Stillingfleet were both labouring for Christianity.

In the court, in spite of Roxanas, Statiras, and other fallen angels, there were still many bright and undeviating planets; even of the twenty-one Hampton Court beauties painted by Lely and Kneller, twelve were of blameless life and spotless manners. Amongst politicians there were found, amid a crowd of hirelings, turncoats, traitors, pimps, and pensioners, the noble Lord Russell, and the patriot Sydney. The vices of the court were the unfortunate result of a vagabond life wasted in a foreign court. Charles and his companions had learnt to pursue pleasure with the thoughtless eagerness with which it is seized by all adventurers,—by the courtesan, the pirate, the gamester, or the highwayman. Pawning ruffles or

shoebuckles for a dinner, nestling in garrets, jostled by the mob of Paris,—the exiled nobles of England had suffered, both in camp and city, all the privations of Grub-Street poets or Tonson's hack-writers. Bandied between two factions, intriguing with English traitors and French demagogues, they had, like their master, learnt to regard the world as a masquerade,—men as hypocrites, and women as little better. All standards of virtue and morality they despised; expediency was their only guide, and self-interest the pilot of their actions. Virtue they sneeringly called the means by which some men made a better market of their votes; at forty, they were fond of saying men grew tired of being honest, and women of being virtuous.

The great hall at Oxford shines like a tulip-bed with varied colours, glittering with ladies' jewels and gallants' sword-belts. The lovely Hamilton, the blushing Bagot, the bewitching Stuart, the tender-eyed Temple, and La

Triste Heritière, are all there, disporting in the careless luxuriance of dress that Lely and Kneller have immortalised. No ponderous head-dresses are worn with wire framework and false hair; but careless ringlets, bound up with a single flower or a string of pearls. Bosoms are uncovered, and arms bare to the elbow. Long trains sweep upon the ground and make up for the scantiness of the coverings of the neck. Rouge and patches are, alas, too common. Brocades of gold and silver adorn the ladies; the gentlemen rustle in gold and silver tissue, with embroidered sword-belts and ribbon sword-knots. The open bodices are tied with ribbons or looped with jewels. Diamond and gold buckles have superseded the roses and huge ribbon bows of Valère, Geronte, and Argan; laced cocked-hats are carried under every arm. Moustaches are seen here and there; and the scented wigs, ambrosial as Apollo's hair, are of enormous size.

Francis I. gallantly said that a court with-

out ladies was like a fine garden without flowers. He could not have complained of any deficiency in the hall of Christchurch. There, surrounded by a gay circle of admirers, the swarthy, deep-lined face of Charles himself laughing over her shoulder, sat the Duchess of Portsmouth, the real empress of the court. Her son, the Duke of Richmond, has just been installed Knight of the Garter, and she is at the height of popularity ; thanks to her condescension to Oates, the French birth and French religion of Madame Carwell are for a time forgotten. Her dark hair is clustered up in thick short curls on each side of her forehead ; her thoughtless eyes are full of gaiety ; and her full lips are prattling scraps of broken English with the prettiest grace in the world. Her sleeves are open, but joined here and there with jewel-clasps ; and looped up at the elbow, allowing the rich lace frills that border them to fall about her fair rounded arms.

In quite a distant corner, under a canopy

of state, surrounded by the late Duchess of York's maids of honour—Miss Bagot, Mrs. Price Hobart, Mrs. Blagg, and Mrs. Nott—sad and silent, stealing now and then a glance at her husband, or stooping to play with his inseparable spaniel, sits the deserted Queen Catherine of Braganza, the saddest-hearted woman in all that gay assembly. She is short and stout; her face round, the nose *retroussé*; her eyes are black, but clouded; her mouth is disfigured by projecting teeth. She is dressed in a simple dress of pearls and white satin, and her dark hair falls in long ringlets on her shoulders.

The proud Duchess of Cleveland has left the court; and La Belle Hamilton is in Paris with her husband De Grammont. La Belle Stuart, the beauty whom the Duke of Richmond bore away from his royal rival, is yonder, robed in sable; and by her side are the Countess of Ossory and the Duchess of Somerset, also bereaved; the three most beautiful of widows that ever wept together. And there, laugh-

ing with Sir Charles Sedley—"the viceroy of Apollo," as he is called—and Sir George Hewet, the prototype of Sir Fopling Flutter, who wears the largest wig and the smallest hat in the room, Nell Gwyn, now a lady of the queen's privy chamber, once an orange-girl in the Duke's Theatre; loved by the mob as Madame Ellen, in spite of her faults; a frank, generous, sincere woman, without hypocrisy, but without decency. Her light hair clusters in bright curls about her head, and wanders over her round innocent forehead and her frank clear eyes, till she shakes it off with a toss of her pretty neck: the wittiest, merriest, frailest creature she is that ever won a heart or lost a reputation. And behind her are the languid Middleton, the languishing Miss Boynton, the fair blonde Miss Blague, and the brilliant Jennings; and there, to the left of the Duchess of Portsmouth, talking in a low voice to Colonel Churchill, is the fair widow Lady Bellasys, who succeeded Lady Denham, Arabella Churchill, Miss Sedley, Miss Hamil-

ton, and Miss Jennings, in the affections of that gloomy lover, the Duke of York. She is not very beautiful, but still does not confirm Charles's witty saying, "that his brother's mistresses seemed allotted to him by his priests as penances." Her eyes are dark, her black hair falls in short curls upon her forehead, and droops in thick clusters on her ivory, swan-like neck.

And amidst all these languid beauties, with their half-shut eyes and rustling robes, pure and saintly, with calm, full, innocent gaze, comes the Countess of Sunderland, that very "little Whig" whom Charles astonished our old friend Sir Robert by once proposing as a toast ; the wife of the rashest and most dangerous politician of the time, she walks by his side the model of womanhood, and yet

"A creature not too bright and good
For human nature's daily food,
For simple sorrows, gentle wiles,
Praise, blame, love, kisses, tears, and smiles."

Now of the gentlemen. There, talk-

ing to Miss Jennings, is the lord of the bed-chamber, the Earl of Oxford, a handsome fop, who appears full of sense till he is imprudent enough to speak ; pulling his sleeve, is the grave Sir Charles Lyttelton ; and there ambles the madcap Killigrew, the master of the revels, and the king's jester, as the wits call him ; Lord Chesterfield, the would-be queen's chamberlain ; Dorset, the best-natured satirist that ever wrote ; the two wits, Sedley and Etherege, comparing snuff-boxes and repartees ; and Arlington, with that black plaster on his nose, that added so much to his air of pompous dullness.

There, too, stands George Saville, the Earl of Halifax, the leader of the trimmers, the sceptic politician, the preacher of neutrality and toleration : he has a full sensual face, dark arched eyebrows, a bright clear eye, with sarcastic mouth and a dimpled chin ; and small dark moustaches lend a piquancy to his face ; a jest or sarcasm is always hovering round the upraised corners of those lips, and he spares neither

friend nor religion when the mood strikes him. He has changed sides so often that he is trusted by none ; and yet the Tories know he would not aid them in despotism, or the Whigs in rebellion. When the king was dangerous, he used to ask if any took a coachman to drive him because the man's father was a good coachman ; and yet he voted against the Bill of Exclusion.

Beside him is Hyde, the Earl of Clarendon, his handsome flushed face lit with a bland and courtly smile ; yet is there a certain fire in his eye, as he glances at some Whig noblemen who have just entered, that speaks of violent political hatred and strong and tempestuous passions.

In one corner, quite away from the crowd of fops and sirens, is a deputation of scientific men, who have come with a petition for a grant of a building site for the Royal Society. There is Boyle, with his weak eyes and grave long face ; Newton, with his quiet air of humility, his square jaw, thick, thoughtful eye-

brows, and great pile of forehead ; the great Dr. Sydenham, with his coarse shrewd features, and compressed mouth ; and old Hobbes, with his sarcastic, cynical smile.

And next them is a deputation of churchmen : Tillotson, the future archbishop, who is now Prebend of St. Paul's, and a popular preacher of the day. His short, square features are shaded by no wig—he wears his own hair, sable, a little silvered, and looks round the hall with an ill-satisfied air and a meditative frown, for he is not in court favour ; Morley, the old Bishop of Winchester, the friend of Falkland and of Clarendon, with a grey peaked beard, in the old style, sits by his side.

And there are Sprat and Burnet, the king's two chaplains ; the one vain and prosy, the other wise and eloquent.

There, too, is Dryden, with his round, noble forehead, keen eye, and twitching mouth, shy yet pleased at the notice of a band of courtiers ; Sir William Davenant and Sir

Roger l'Estrange, who have come down to obtain his Majesty's consent to the performance at court of the king's favourite play, "The Maiden Queen." Sir William's cheek is already lined deeply, and his eyes grow dim.

Rochester is dead, and Buckingham is fox-hunting at his Yorkshire country-seat, Death on the pale horse tracking him as he rides.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE HONEST MAN THAT DIOGENES LOOKED FOR.

“STAP my vitals,” said Sir George Hewit, with a drawl that seemed to indicate consumption, but really implied the extreme fashionable culture of that day (Sir George pronounced all his O’s as A’s, though Titus Oates had begun to render this less modish), “if that daag Churchill has not been making me and the charming Temple die of laughing describing an aald fax-hunter squire that the king visited this marning on his way to Aaxfard, who sung a saang aver his pudding, and drank two battles of claret to the memary of the ‘blessed martyr’; ’gad, it would be quite refreshing to see a real live Cavalier fax-hunter.

I thought the race had gane by, like the Picts and the Danes."

"Then you may have that pleasure sooner than you expect," said Claverhouse, with a keen glance under his eyes at the fop he despised; "for the honest man, at the risk of getting spoilt by court dandies and robbed by court gamblers, favours the ball this night with his presence."

"Was old Rowley searching for an honest man, like Diogenes," said Etherege, joining in the conversation, "or did he stumble upon this specimen by accident, just as men in ploughing wheat-fields often turn up the bones of the giants who lived before the Flood?"

"The curiosity has a daughter," said Churchill, stroking his moustaches and looking demurely at the wax-lights in the nearest chandelier.

"A daughter!" cried the circle.

"Not so loud, gentlemen, or old Rowley will hear us."

“Oh, a red-cheeked bumpkin, I wager you a cool hundred,” cried another, “that strums ‘Green Sleeves’ on a cracked spinet, spends all her days in darning the family tapestry, and brewing Hungary water, and half her nights in making possets for the old Cavalier her father, who sends her to sleep telling stories of Edgell, longer and more tiresome than old Rowley’s of the Pendrells and the Boscobel Oak.”

“Generation of unbelievers,” said Churchill, “I tell you she has more fire than Miss Boynton, better eyes than Miss Jennings, whiter teeth than Miss Price.”

“Ah, ah!” laughed the circle. “What, Churchill, who plays the guitar better than Francisco, dances a saraband as well as Sedley, the glory of the Ring, the star of the Mulberry Gardens—”

“Now, no flattery,” said Churchill deprecatingly. “Ask Troutbeck; he told me, and has seen her. But halloo! he’s crept

off; and how red the man turned! Zounds, I think the squire's daughter has already learnt how to use Cupid's shafts. But what's this? The Green Ribbons are not breaking in, and going to make a Protestant Bartholomew of it?"

This latter remark was occasioned by a scuffle which was heard in the lobby,—a sound of voices in angry discussion increased, till the conversation in the immediate neighbourhood died away; the next moment a servant entered, and, with an agitated face, inquired for the lord chamberlain. Arlington, sedate and pompous as usual, accompanied him out, beckoning with his white wand of office, amid the suppressed laughter of Killigrew and a knot of young wits who stood conversing in an under-tone near the door.

In a few minutes Arlington returned, and whispered to the king, who, looking for a moment puzzled, instantly smiled and exclaimed, "Why, it's my old friend the

fox-hunting baronet, to be sure ! Admit him, of course, Arlington."

"Indeed," said Arlington, "I think he would have forced his way in, sword in hand, if you had not let him ; for I saw him strike one pert French varlet a blow on the ear that would have felled an ox. Had his daughter not prevented him drawing his sword, I think there had been mischief done ; I heard him say that his rule was, 'A word and a blow, and the blow first ;' swearing that he was a true Tory subject, and the palace was open to all old Cavaliers."

"A good old fellow," said Charles. "I long to see him, with his proverbs and scraps of *Hudibras*, among our fine gentlemen and painted madams here. How he'll yawn at Mrs. Davis's singing and Francisco's guitar !"

He had hardly done speaking ere the door flew open, and to the sound of the twenty-four fiddles, which Killigrew had secretly bid strike up, by way of jest, entered old Sir Robert, with Mabel on his arm. He was

attired in a long coat of cinnamon-coloured velvet, richly ornamented with buttons and loops of rather faded gold lace, and in a long flap-waistcoat of white satin, embroidered with gold damask. He held in his hand an old high-crowned hat, of a fashion twenty years exploded, the crimson feathers trailing on the ground; a heavy gilt-handled sword hung by his side; while round his neck was the chain of a silver dog-whistle that depended like an order upon his breast. He wore no wig; and his face, rather flushed with the late altercation, contrasted strongly with the silver grey of his hair; but he walked erect like a brave old soldier, and looked round with an air of dignity, as men do whose self-esteem has been roused by some recent insult.

Mabel, her hair looped up with a simple string of pearls, shone like a silver statue in her white brocade; as, with all the calm grace of an English gentlewoman, she looked round with a startled air at a scene which as yet she had only realized in her dreams of

the Arabian Nights, or the dreariest romances of Madlle. Scudery. An involuntary murmur spread through the room at the beauty of the new comer. The sad queen beheld her with melancholy interest, as if prepared to hail a new rival. The proud Portsmouth frowned; and her little court of parasites had in a moment invented, and begun to insinuate, a hundred different detractions. Mabel was at once too pale, too red; too tall, too short; she had too much hair for it all to be real; she painted, she ought to paint; she had cork heels; she laced too tight; she was sunburnt; she was a poor die-away, and she was a rude hoyden.

With that usual suavity of manner that made Charles, with all his heartlessness, ever the darling of the crowd and the best beloved of English kings, he advanced through a lane of courtiers; and as Sir Robert, overcome with the honour, was about to drop on one knee, he prevented the homage,

and shook him by the hand with all the familiarity of an old acquaintance.

“A troublesome guest,” he said, “welcomes his kind host to his temporary court in his good city of Oxford.”

“Your Majesty does me too much honour,” said Sir Robert, reddening with pride and pleasure.

“A new star in our firmament,” continued Charles, turning to the crowd of scientific men who were discussing some deep proposition with such abstracted energy as to appear quite insensible of the new object of attention; “one, Mr. Newton, not yet, I think, discovered, even by your profound researches.”

Mr. Newton bowed, and stammered an inaudible attempt at a repartee.

“Only to think of the creature having no wig: *quel monstre!*” said the Duchess of Portsmouth. “Does he come from Abyssinia? And that maypole of a daughter, with cherry-coloured ribbons to a white

gown: *quelle horreur, quelle bêtise!* We shall have all the farmers' daughters brought to court next; the actresses have come already," she said, glancing to Nell Gwyn, who was watching Mabel with a smile of approval, and beating time with her little foot to the music of a lute that an Italian was playing in one corner, not entirely unmindful of the beauty of the music, not entirely unmindful of the beauty of her foot.

"Allow me to introduce a brave old Cavalier soldier to the Duchess of Portsmouth," said Charles, pointing Sir Robert a chair at his side, being perhaps anxious to introduce Mabel to the queen, to whom he handed her, much to the indignation of various envious ladies, whose basilisk glances, if there was any faith in the Turkish tradition of the evil eye, would certainly have been the death of the unconscious Mabel.

Sir Robert was a stout man in the hunting-field, loud-voiced and hearty. He would have been a brave man too at the head of a

troop of horse ; but, to tell the sober truth, he felt now singularly awkward by the side of a grand jewelled lady, who he knew was the celebrated "Madame Carwell," who did not speak very good English, frowned at all he said, and pouted at the king, who eyed the couple, as he bore off Mabel, with a look of sly sarcasm that enraged her.

Sir Robert alluded to the weather being favourable for sportsmen. Did her grace like Oxford ? He hadn't been there since the last assizes. The duchess pouted, looked at her bracelet, pursed up her mouth, and replied in French monosyllables. Did her grace like that twangling thing the fellow was playing in the corner ? He (Sir Robert) preferred the tabor and pipe."

"Pipe !" said the duchess, sarcastically ; "Oh, ah, *oui*—all you English like your pipe de tabac."

Did her grace dance ? He did not care about those new sarabands, as they called them, or any of your French—(Mum ; he

got into a scrape here)—but preferred the cushion-dance.

“What! the cushion-dance, where they kneel and kiss?—*le barbare!*” then getting up, the duchess fairly turned her back on the honest baronet, and sweeping off, train and all, with half a dozen toadies following, left Sir Robert somewhat dumbfounded at the result of his first attempt at small-talk with a court lady.

“Halloo, quotha,” muttered the baronet to himself, looking with a shrewd and puzzled air at the immense old-fashioned bows on his square-toed shoes, “come up with her tantrums! and madam they say no better than she should be. Was that rouge, or did she blush? Zounds, but I think though it was rouge.”

“Decidedly rouge; a French blush washes off very soon,” said a low laughing voice at his elbow. It was Nell Gwyn, who, having observed the honest fellow’s perplexity, had good-humouredly come to his rescue.

‘I am altogether of your opinion, sir,” said Madam Helen; “and think the old pipe and tabor I have footed to a thousand times better than these squeaking fiddlers all in a row—and a pest on ’em.”

“’Tis a merry one, surely, and has a dancing eye,” thought Sir Robert, quite ignorant whom he addressed. “Are there many of the old troopers here, madam?” he said to his companion.

“But few,” said Nell. “Court air does not agree with old Cavaliers.”

“No? Well, Oxford air does,” said Sir Robert, striking his broad chest. “Here I am, hale and hearty, after sixty years of hard riding and camping out, and hunting Puritans and foxes; yes, here I am, worse off by some dozen acres, and maybe a hundred trees, but still stanch as ever; ay, if the rogues turn up once more, ready to boot and saddle, and do the old thing over again.”

“It was only last week,” said Nell, her eyes sparkling with innocent fun at the

thought of what a story for the king this conversation would make, "that I and old Rowley—"

"May I ask who is old Rowley?" said Sir Robert.

"Old Rowley?" said Nell, laughing; "why, don't you know that's our name for the king? We were in the barge going from Hampton to Whitehall, when an old soldier with one leg came begging to the water-side; and I prayed Rowley to build some sort of dock for such brave old hulks, and he promised to; for he has a kind heart, whatever the Whigs say of him."

"The Whigs'll say anything," said Sir Robert, dogmatically. "And you did think of the old soldiers—a blessing on your heart for it. I must introduce you to my little daughter. May I beg your name, madam?"

"My name is Eleanor Gwyn—generally called for shortness Nelly—and very much at your service;" then curtsying with an air of

mock respect the thoughtless, warm-hearted *vaurienne* rose from her seat, and plunged into the crowd in the direction of a loud laugh, which indicated the presence of some wit of the first magnitude.

“Madam Helen!” said Sir Robert, turning up his eyes. “Well, give me the madam, and let those take the duchess who like her—a painted miss!”

Ere the baronet could well conclude his meditations, the crowd suddenly separated, and a celebrated actress of the day, well known as possessing the most beautiful voice of the time, swam wantonly to a seat at a rich spinet, where she began to trill Dorset’s well-known sea-song, “To all you Ladies now on Land,” Dorset himself turning over the music.

Sir Robert listened very hard for the first verse, and beat time to the final “La, la, la;” at the second verse he yawned audibly; at the third he looked drowsy and vacant; at the fourth, terrible to say, he snored.

The song was ended; but the baronet—tired by the late hours, the glare of light, and the sound of voices—did not wake till a hand tapped him on the shoulder. It was the king. With a startled stare Sir Robert, aware that something had happened, attempted to make up for lost time by clapping his horny hands with great vehemence, and exclaiming, “Capital! a very good song!” in a stentorian voice, better adapted for a session dinner than the perfumed region of a court. Then, awaking to a faint remembrance of his last interview with Charles, he struck up the first line of “There is a Pudding by the Fire;” but stopped suddenly, coughed, and relapsed into confused silence.

In the meantime the king, not without frequent shrewd glances at his friend the old baronet, had led fair Mabel through a crowd of courtiers, who divided into a lane as he passed, bowing to some, shaking hands with others, jesting with all, he left those

whom he passed smiling and pleased—the Whigs soothed and the Tories delighted. His free comments at his guests amused Mabel, timid as she felt at the unusual honour and the unusual scene.

“My dear Miss Darcy,” he said, in a whisper so loverlike that it flushed her cheek, “consider me the keeper of this menagerie, and ask me any questions. I see your bright eyes directed to that stern-looking old soldier leaning against the folding-doors. He is an old Cavalier, who is so proud of his glass eye and wooden leg that he thinks himself fortunate in having spent all his fortune and half his life to procure them. Do you see that fantastic lady who comes limping up to him? That is Lady Muskerrey, who delights in dancing, and never misses a minuet; a triumph over natural difficulties which adds greatly to the praises she earns by her skill. You will observe she frequently smiles, not from good nature, for she is of a severe disposition; not at lovers, for she is the best

of wives—but simply to show a very beautiful expensive set of false teeth. The lady on her other hand not even Sedley's wit, you see, can induce to open her mouth. Near the fiddlers you will remark several people collected, and in pairs ; those I could swear are lovers, for the gentlemen are all whispering, and the ladies are all looking down. They get there in order that the sound may prevent their tender confessions being heard. One lady has just dropped a billet from her glove, which a rival is picking up unseen by her. There is Rogers describing how he broke his leg fox-hunting to the guitar-player, who seems *terriblement ennuyé*—he wont spare him a pill or a plaster. And there's Sir Gregory Brice telling, as he always does every night about this time, how the great Condé offended the proud old Spaniard who defended Lerida by mounting the breach at the head of some four-and-twenty fiddlers crowned with laurel."

"May I ask your majesty who that lady is to the right?"

“That is a great heiress, who is wooed by everybody with great intrepidity, though old, ugly, and rather insipid. Leaning over her is Sedley—Apollo’s viceroy, as the poet calls him; he rides the great horse well, is a good tennis-player, fences, dances, plays the guitar *à merveille*, pens a sonnet, speaks French like a native, reads Italian, knows all the jargon of the Grand Cyrus, and can repeat half the new *Arabian Nights* by heart.”

While the king was still speaking, Sedley suddenly took up the lute, looked up to the ceiling as if to remember some old song, and amid a crowd of smiling admirers, intermingled with here and there a frown or sneer of cold approval, commenced, in a sweet full voice, a silly French love-song; his eyes keeping in one direction, and if wandering, returning there, as the butterfly fixes on a flower, but after many flutterings.

“Thy cheeks are cherries that do grow,—
N’oserez-vous, ma belle amy?
Among the western mounts of snow,—
Je vous-en prie, then pity me:
N’oserez-vous, ma belle, ma belle,
N’oserez-vous, ma belle amy?”

Thy lips vermilion full of love,—
N’oserez-vous, ma belle amy?
Thy neck as silver-white as dove,—
Je vous-en prie, then pity me:
N’oserez-vous, ma belle, ma belle,
N’oserez-vous, ma belle amy?”

Sedley had already sung two verses of this air, when a tremendous plunging crash on the keys of the neighbouring spinet, and the flight of a dark mass in a half-circle through the air, preceded by a short snappish bark, and ending with a howl, interrupted the performance, and sent the ladies screaming, with many pretty interjections, expressed by the tossing of fans and pendent sleeves. It was Fidèle, who finding his tail trod upon by the heavy foot of Sir Robert, had turned and quietly bit him in the calf with the same royal composure that he would have done a page or a gentleman-in-waiting; the

sturdy old soldier, in the moment's pain, forgetful of all consequences, had given him a kick, that, raising him in the air, deposited him, frightened but unhurt, on the keys of the piano.

Charles, unable to control himself, sank into a chair, and laughed immoderately at the old baronet's mingled rage and regret, the ladies' sympathy, and the merriment of the courtiers.

"Not a word, Sir Robert," he said, when he could speak. "Fidèle is always in mischief—tearing the ladies' muffs, picking up stray love-letters, and pulling ribbons to pieces; he needs more correction, I think, than Rogers or Chaffinch gives him."

But further attention was diverted from this incident by the roar of voices that was now heard filling the quadrangle, and the glare of passing torches that, overpowering all the light of the wax candles in the room, shone red upon the curtains and the ceiling. Cries of "No Popery!" could be

heard, undulating from street to street, and breaking out in fresh thunders, till they died away in the distance.

The roar without was still ringing in the room, when the folding-doors flew open, and the Earl of Shaftesbury, followed by Lord William Russell, and other noblemen of his party, entered the room. His eye was unusually bright, as if with a sense of triumph; his cheeks were, however, sunken, his complexion was sallow, and his mouth drawn at the corners as if with long illness. He leant on the arm of his friend.

Lord Russell, the purest politician of the day, had a heavy broad face that showed no great intellectual power, full cheeks, thick lips, and a double chin; but there was candour on his clear brow, and undaunted courage in his grey eye.

“Sir Robert Darcy, your most obedient,” said a small effeminate voice just then at the country-gentleman’s elbow. He looked round,

and a handsome young fop, with his cravat and sword-knot bright with poppy-coloured ribbons, bowed till he almost touched the ground. Sir Robert returned the compliment with a rough, quick, hearty nod of recognition.

“Mr. Fielding, I think; we met once in the Oxfordshire hunt?”

“Mr. Fielding, *vraiment* and very devotedly at your service,” said the beau, a mere creature of ribbon and feather, sitting down beside Sir Robert, and with an air of the utmost self-confidence, pulling down his perfumed peruke, and eyeing with extreme complacency the buckle on his well-trimmed shoe; then exchanging, with a rapidity that staggered his new acquaintance, an ogle and bow right and left.

“To a man of the town, Sir Robert,” he said, languidly, “I think, without some of Chevalier’s curiously scented snuff, such an evening as this of ours with Rowley would be positively odious. If I were not a bit of a *virtuoso*—”

“What’s that?” thought Sir Robert, turning up his eyes to the ceiling. “A cock-fight is worth two of it,” he said, as if the remark was the result of long meditation.

“You have reason, sir,” said the beau, tapping his snuff-box; “but in fine—”

“Gad-a-mercy,” thought Sir Robert to himself, “I’ve either forgotten my English, or this gentleman never learnt his. What does he mean by ‘you have reason’ and ‘in fine’? It may be Whitehall lingo; but it isn’t Oxfordshire, I’ll bet a guinea.”

“The society here,” said the beau, continuing his conversation without any regard to the patience or impatience of his listener, “but for Sedley and a few of the Levites—if I may use the *à-la-mode* phrase—would be dull, sir, dull,—I do not scruple to use the word to a good high Tory,—dull.”

“I beg pardon, young gentleman,” said Sir Robert, “but I don’t quite understand these new-coined phrases that you use, as ‘in fine,’ sir. I must have time to think.”

“Your ladyship’s most fortunately met,” said the beau, rising to bow to a beauty that swept by as he was about to speak, followed by a train of admirers, laughing, bowing, and ogling. “Think, sir !” he said, continuing his conversation with Sir Robert ; “men who know the *à-la-mode* never think ; that we leave to scriveners and dirty shop-people about the unknown regions of the City.”

“By the mass, young gentleman, if I follow you ; this is but dull work compared to the hunting-field. By cox-wouns, if I can understand more than every third word of these Scanderbeg fellows. Now, when Captain True, as I used to call my huntsman, told stories about old Reynard and the different runs he had had for twenty years past, I could follow him every inch, though he spoke broad Lancashire.”

“’Tis like basset, dear sir, it has to be learnt.”

“Odsbobs, man, but didn’t I learn my mother English fifty years ago in my horn-

book ; and must I go to school again ? Bodikins, but I wish I was back now at Crow's Nest, with the good honest smell of the stable, instead of all their cursed spices and wigs, I warrant you ; as if Nature hadn't given us hair, without needs of buying——"

"Have you seen Mr. Dryden's *Art of Love*, Sir Robert, at the Duke's ?"

"Not I ; the last play I saw was at the Globe, twenty years syne—Shakspeare's *Tempest*."

"Obsolete ; not at all *à-la-mode* ; only known now by Mr. Dryden's version. Wonderful talent ! Hero, a man who has seen no woman ; heroine, woman seen no man ; full of *esprit, parbleu, a miracle de génie*."

"Why, there it is," said Sir Robert ; "there's your lingo again. I tell you, Sir, I don't know French, don't speak French, don't want to. I've found my own tongue sufficient for fifty years, and I won't learn another now."

"Do you see that gentleman in the sober-coloured suit ?" said the beau, looking with

great earnestness. "He's a good striker-out, but a better back-hand ; he judges a ball well, but can't play for a chase."

"Ay, verily," said Sir Robert, looking in the direction, though not knowing the least in what science the peculiar excellencies of this gentleman consisted : for by back-handed he supposed he meant something the reverse of left-handed or under-handed.

"You should have seen old Rowley yesterday, shouting about his nets and twists and forces ; and calling to the marker, 'Forty love and a chase !' as he made his play. It was *à merveille*, it was admirable, it was *charmant*."

"I don't know any of your card-games," said Sir Robert, not knowing that the beau was quoting the technical terms of tennis, Charles's favourite sport, and one that had almost superseded bowls, which his father had been so fond of. "Give me a Welsh main in a snug pit, and I would not change places with a king. Lord, to see a ginger pile and

a dun spar at each other, just as if they were Christians; or a duckwing and a black-breasted red stand up like Whig and Tory,—whoop, lad, it's the rarest sport: 'Pull, baker, pull, devil,' as the proverb goes, the devil take the hindmost, say I; that is, mark me, if there's no rooking, no cracking the beak and blunting the gaffles, or cramping the thighs with a hair. A good game-cock by nature, sir, is a pattern to Christians."

"'Tis an unnatural and cruel sport, methinks," said Mr. Locke, who was standing by, and now joined in the conversation.

"Bodikins, where's the cruel, when the cocks are good and the spurs are sharp? Strike, strike right, strike left; at last a hit through the brain—dead, like a hero! Where's the harm in that? Why, 'tis not so bad as pricking at each other, like court gallants, with steel skewers about a paltry guinea lost at cribbage. Out upon it!"

"You are perhaps a stranger to our London cockpits, where a set of cursing ruffians

collect to see two of the most innocent of God's creatures mangle themselves to death."

"Zounds, now out with ye! Providence meant 'em to fight. Who gave 'em spurs, look you, now?—and who gave them courage? Have I got ye?"

"He's one of Shaftesbury's canting Whigs," said the beau, as Mr. Locke mixed again with the crowd.

"So I thought, so I thought," said Sir Robert. "No one but a Dissenter would go slap against Providence like that."

As the beau was about to launch into a eulogy of the beauty of a certain lady, whom he had been ogling for some minutes, the king again approached, holding by one hand Mabel and by the other a lady of advanced age, but still of considerable beauty, whose mouth was pursed up and prim, and whose eyes were bent patronisingly on the old baronet.

"Allow me, Sir Robert," said the king, with an air which a deeper observer than the old baronet would scarcely have known to be

quizzical, “to introduce to you the Dowager Duchess of Newcastle, who, with her usual amenity, has taken your lovely daughter under her patronage ; and who, amidst her profound studies of atoms, diseases, geometry, tooth-aches, and astrology, has still time to visit our court, and grace it with her august presence.”

Sir Robert bowed ; and *la femme savante* took the fop’s seat, who, glad to escape, mixed again in the more congenial crowd.

The duchess, who had been wickedly informed by the king that Sir Robert was a *virtuoso* of great learning, and who attributed the negligence of his dress to his scholarly habits, plunged at once into her latest discoveries.

“These amusements, Sir Robert, are little fitted to the learned, doing nothing but effervesce the brain and disturb the heart ; especially being, as I am now, intent on studying the laws of heat,—heat seeming to me

mere motion, and all minerals being hot bodies, whose motions have been suspended at various stages of their evaporation," &c.

Sir Robert bowed; and the lady continued, much pleased with her patient and learned auditor; "the incomparable princess and nurse of art"—as the poets in their dedications called her—being as voluble as she was learned. But we must not weary our readers with further details of this royal entertainment; suffice it to say that a little before midnight Sir Robert and Mabel retired to take horse on the morrow for Crow's Nest.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE TWO KINGS.

A WET morning at Hampton Court, and the king was intolerably bored. The rain came down straight and fierce, with a dull threshing sound, that was relentless and vexatious. The rose-leaves at the great palace-windows glistened with wet; and at every gust of wind rows of loose diamonds, big as crown-jewels, shook from the sharp stone ledges and cornices, from massy window-sills, and the stone garlands and bunches of fruit that garnished every crystal-paned opening. The broad gravel walks, bright orange as a new-fried sole (so M. Ortolon, the French cook, said), were

sodden into pools that shone with a dull white light; the fountain's echo in the inner court sounded wearisome and melancholy, and the square stones of the terraces were washed white and marbly.

The king, swarthy and sallow, looked out of the windows and yawned. Every thing that miserable day had gone wrong, in spite of his four-and-twenty fiddlers having roused him from sleep by the newest French airs. He had quarrelled with Nell about a new set of diamonds, and Nell had retreated pouting to rehearse some private theatricals by herself in the Great Gallery. He had been sitting an hour to Lely, but getting tired of the restriction, had then written an epigram to Nell with his diamond ring on the window of the north drawing-room. He had begun to play with Chaffinch at billiards, but lost the game; and now, moped and fretful as a spoilt child, he was engaged in the throne-room in teaching one of his pet spaniels to beg; the dog being placed in the crimson velvet chair, above

which the royal arms shone in gold, the king being stretched on a pile of cushions, on which he occasionally threw himself back to glance over a pile of parliamentary papers with which his ministers had been perplexing him the day before. A more complete specimen of a *roi fainéant* than Charles presented at that moment could scarcely be seen.

A thought of importance struck the king; he sprang from his seat, and rang with impatience a silver bell that lay on a bracket table near. Ere the sound had died away a valet stood before him, silent as the genii that waited on Aladdin's ring.

“François, Fidèle wants some milk and biscuit, and be sure the pups have some sopped rusks.—And, François, bring me a cold fowl and some sherry; it gets near meridian, and having nothing to do makes even a king hungry. But whose carriage is that driving so furiously into the court, the coachman wet as a sponge, the horses smoking sops? The prince, as I live—gloomy as

ever! Come, I wager a thousand crowns, to petition for some one-eyed, one-legged, truculent old Cavalier who lost an arm at Worcester. It makes me yawn—the very sight of Rupert. Yes, by the powers of darkness, there is some friend, too, more villanous looking than usual, but arms and legs complete; and dressed, like Tamerlane in the play, in crimson brocade and—eh, what? a gold cross, as I'm a sincere Christian;—why, it must be the ambassador of Morocco at least. Here, François, run for the crown and sceptre; I must dress like the king of trumps, I suppose, or I shall be what the prince calls unkingly. On second thoughts, never mind the crown, but bring me a glass of *rosa solis*; it refreshes the spirits and washes the cobwebs out of the cerebellum. Sweep out the dogs, shake up these cushions, clear away these cards and dice, and hang up that guitar in my bedroom. Show the prince and his villanous-looking commodore in, while I go and put myself to rights in this closet;

if I am detained more than an hour, tell Mistress Gwyn to invent some pretext to send for me. These old soldiers will be the death of me some day; they're worse than the rascals who drove me up into the oak. Did I ever tell you that story, François? Well—but I've no time now. O Lord, there they are; I hear those dreadful jack-boots—tramp, tramp, creak, creak; the very sound gives me the vapours." And so saying—every sentence broken up into a dozen frivolous episodes, with occasional attempts to bring in one of those long Worcester stories so much dreaded by the courtiers—the good-natured, frivolous, cynical, worthless king hurried off to put on something more suitable for the reception of the punctilious Rupert than the plain mouse-coloured velvet doublet worn smooth on the left side by the repeated thrusts of foils—which he then wore; carrying a yelping spaniel, beautiful, with long silken ears and liquid, timorous eyes, under each arm, and François following him with an armful of

cards, dice-boxes, foils, lutes, and tennis-balls.

The tapestry had scarcely fallen over the door that hid the dressing-closet of the king, when another door, opening on a staircase, the wall of which was resplendent with the newly-painted works of Le Verrio—fiddling angels, Cæsars, and Venuses—flew open, and Prince Rupert entered, followed by the crimson gentleman, whom our readers may perhaps identify as Captain Morgan, the Welsh buccaneer leader, whose rencontre with Wild-fire we have mentioned in a previous chapter. His bent back and rolling gait denoted the sailor, his uneasy eye and cruel determined mouth the pirate and freebooter.

Prince Rupert, the Murat of the civil war, the scourge of England, the terror and detestation of the Roundhead critics, was now rapidly sinking into old age; but no dimness of time had yet weakened his fierce hawk-like eye, or bent his proud, erect, defiant frame. His grave soldierly dress presented as singular

a contrast with the almost theatrical costume of Morgan as his meditative stern glance did with the suspicious, distrustful look with which Morgan scanned the dark corners of the room, eyed the doors and windows, or watched the tapestry every time it rose or fluttered. A distant footfall, a far off laugh from the gallery where Nell was romping over her part, sufficed to make the buccaneer steal his hand to the heavy sabre he wore, or fumble under his cross for the concealed pistol he never failed to carry. His greasy fell of dark hair, his thick over-grown eyebrows, his restless bloodshot eyes, his scarred chin, and his cruel, distrustful mouth, sufficed to make up the totality of as thorough a ruffian as ever disgraced humanity.

With an angry glance round the empty room, the prince turned round and questioned the attendant, who had told him that the king was awaiting him in the throne-room. The man quailed before the old soldier's eye and the scowling Morgan, who swore that, if

he had him afloat, he'd strappado him before he could heave a lead. The man stammered an apology :

"His Highness—his Majesty—perhaps with Mistress Gwyn, rehearsing *Roxalana* in the Great Gallery."

"So we tread the primrose path," said Rupert, almost to himself, with a sigh ; "fiddlers and harlots, pall-mall and ombre, at the very moment that the crown is melting on his head. Already rebellious flames break out with unquenchable violence ; the villain cripple, Shaftesbury, is already moulding the crown for the bastard fool's head, and the true successor dare hardly show himself in the streets of this London. Give me but half a regiment of horse, and I would sweep the earth of these howling rebels ; slay the best of them, as Samuel slew Agag, to use their own cursed cant, and drag this lame hunchback to a miserable prison."

"Clear the streets with grape, and use fire-pots, if they shut themselves up in

houses," said Morgan, his eyes kindling at the smell of blood; "have gibbets ready at Charing Cross; use the torture for the boys and old men; they'll let out anything at the first sting of the burning match. Shut the city gates. Drag a ten pounder up the church-towers to command the squares——"

"But what hope of preserving royal honour," said Rupert, apparently not hearing the sympathetic remarks of his *protégé*, "when we have a king who sneers at the blessed martyr, wastes his time with jockeys and strumpets, and disregards all the ceremonies of his position?"

"No, not entirely, Rupert," said a laughing voice as the tapestry lifted up, and Charles stepped forth, crown and all, dressed in his cloth-of-gold coronation-robcs, which he used at the Oxford parliament he had lately opened. "Here I am, complete as the king of trumps, come to welcome to my court the prince of diamonds and the knave of—Where?" and he looked interrogatively, with a slight smile,

first at Morgan and then at Rupert. "But there, don't scowl, Rupert; I only did it just to amuse you, this wet day requires some amusement. My royal consort—"

"I wish your Majesty good morrow," said the prince, bowing, with the somewhat Spanish punctiliousness of the old school; his Castilian gravity contrasting oddly enough with the laughing affectation of kingliness assumed by Charles. "I thought your royal consort of Braganza preserved her usual seclusion, so unusual in this frivolous age, at her palace at Somerset House."

"My royal consort is here," said Charles, stepping back into his closet, and bringing forth on his arm the merry grisette, Nell Gwyn, still wearing the fantastic trappings of the Persian Roxana.

"How have you spent your morning, Kate?" said Charles, chucking the sparkling-eyed actress playfully beneath the chin. "I trust in devotions suitable to the season of

the vigil of St. Merryfellow and the eve of the Ten Thousand Virgins."

"Yase, your Majesty, three masses began the morning, which I have since spent in vorking an altar cloth for the church of St. Bartholomew, and in repeating three hundred litanza," said Nell, imitating the broken Portuguese of the neglected wife, who had lately so nearly fallen a victim to the bloodthirsty promoters of the Popish plot, and bowing ridiculously to the angry prince and his companion. Morgan, though ignorant of court manners, seemed somewhat astonished at the free-and-easy grace of her Majesty of Portugal, whose eye was resting most approvingly, if not devotionally, on the diamond cross, torn from some bleeding Spaniard, which shone on his broad bull-like breast. Repeated rough bows and scrapings of the legs indicated his recognition of the presence of Majesty.

"May I ask," said Charles, "what especial business of state brings my dear Hotspur on such a morning as this, in spite of gout and

rheumatism, to brave this campaigning Dutch weather, to spoil my royal gravel walks and to interrupt me in the pleasant task of hearing Nell recite her part? Now then, Nell, go on :

‘ When Xerxes, shining like a quenchless sun,
Blazed in the glory—’

Now go on. Where were we? Adzooks, what a fustian fellow this Nat Lee is. But, stop a bit; Hotspur is going to speak.”

“Is an old soldier to be vilified with nicknames?” said Rupert, angrily, his mouth twitching under the thick covert of his moustache. “Your noble father would never have disgraced my age with such revilings.”

“There, for God’s sake, Rupert, don’t go and throw my father in my face—But, lud, the man’s angry! Why, Rupert,” he said, touching his kinsman kindly on the shoulder, “I wouldn’t hurt thee for the crown of France, including the claret country. Why, man, can’t you bear with mad old Rowley, who you have said so often was a good jack-pudding

spoilt, and remember that although he is not of such fiery blood as thou, he can sometimes—on wet days and cold nights—think deeply of the scurvy set of pimps and fools he has fallen amongst, and thank God that in a dismal old house in the Barbican—surrounded by pikes and guns and bows, retorts, crucibles, and air-pumps—there still lives a brave old soldier, clear of brain and sound of heart, who is ready to die for him at a moment's notice?"

"My kinsman and my prince," said Rupert, throwing himself, with all the fire of his younger days, at Charles's feet, and kissing the thoughtless monarch's proffered hand, but still averting his proud grave eyes from the laughing siren who hung with a clinging weight to the royal arm, "my sword, my heart, my blood is yours."

"I can't bear a scene, Rupert," said Charles, stepping forward to a richly carved cabinet, and drawing out a small handsomely bound book from the top shelf. "I need no proof

that you love me; in such times as these, I should be indeed a miserable fopling if I didn't value such service. But, *vive la bagatelle!* 'No more of that, Hal, an you love me.' Now, Nell, go on:

'Call Furies with their crowns of red-fanged snakes.'

You don't know it?—This, Rupert, is not, as I see you imagine, *The Gamester's Complete Companion*, nor the naughty Dialogues of Aretino; but honest Master Evelyn's *History of Chalcography*, illustrated with a marvellous mezzotint portrait of one of Salvator Rosa's most chivalrous-looking cut-throats. There now; what a powder-magazine you are! It's an admirable thing of yours, full of Rembrandt's most poetic gloom. Very like indeed," said the merry monarch, holding up the portrait to Rupert's face; "his own invention, too, Nell."

"Fie! it's like a chimney-sweep," said Nell, pushing the matchless mezzotinto from her with her little, fat, dimpled hand; for she did not like the severe old soldier.

“You are a little fool, Nelly, and know more about painting and the hare’s-foot than the burin and the steel-plate.”

“I paint!” said Nelly, pulling away from his arm, and pouting, at the same time changing crowns with Charles, who laughingly bartered his real pile of sapphires and rubies for her paste and Bristol diamonds.

“Yes,” said Charles, pursuing his comparison; “the bold aquiline nose; the same fine Greek mouth, perhaps a little disdainful—but let that pass; the chin of Cæsar, the nose of Alexander, the artist’s swelling brow, and the soldier’s hawking eye. But, in the name of confusion, what made you put this rag, Rupert, to hide your fine forehead? It gives him a little of the banditti air; eh, Nell?”

“Forsooth, quite a Claude du Val.”

“Nonsense, Nell! Go and learn your ranting play, and give me my crown, or egad I’ll send you to the Tower, as I’m an anointed king. Isn’t the chiaroscuro perfect?” said

Charles, turning inquiringly and politely to Morgan.

“I don’t know the lingo,” said Morgan, with a confused scrape of the left leg; “look you, by Saint Tavid, I never saw the word in any ship’s books.”

“Art is an island not often traded to,” said Charles. “But, by-the-by, Rupert, I’ve got a prize for you—a rare animal, becoming rapidly extinct—a real old Cavalier, eyes, nose, and legs, too, complete, who can tell you stories by the hour of breaking in among the pikes at Edgehill, and killing Cromwell’s drum-major at Wigan; swears and drinks in the real, old, original way, just like Goring or Lunsford—’gad, my head aches to think of it now; claps you on the back, man; and stirs up his canary with a fox’s brush, to give it a sporting flavour.”

“And has a pretty daughter, I presume, or your Majesty had let him go whistle.”

“Well, there you have me; he has indeed. Don’t pout, Nell; it spoils your expression.

Such eyes, Nell ! no cruel, disdainful sparklers, that pierce and slay, but soft dove-like fondlers—so inquiring, and tender, and anxious. Such cheeks too : talk of peaches—pooh ! scarlet blotches ; talk of roses—mere rouge !”

“ The hoyden !” said Nell, unable to contain the moment’s annoyance and jealousy. “ A great country Cicely, Prince, with large red hands and feet like flat fish. Pish ! I’ve seen such on assize days, dragged in the old family coach, with the great clown of a brother, and the blockhead—”

“ Nelly,” said Charles, “ remember you are queen in Persia, and not in England.—By-the-by, Rupert, have you heard anything of this thief, Morgan, who has been cutting Spaniards’ throats in Panama, and whom the court of Madrid plague me to death about ? A daring fellow he must be ; one of the real bull-dog race that you love, who always flies at head and throat, and never turns tail.”

“ He is now in England,” said Rupert, a sarcastic smile slowly relaxing his severe features,

and glancing at Morgan, who had become during the last speech more and more uneasy.

“And under arrest, I suppose?”

“No; free as your Majesty.”

“Indeed! He must have a bold heart; as ready to face English judges with Spanish dollars, I suppose, as he was to face Spaniards with English steel. Where lurks, then, this modern Drake, half-Raleigh and half-highway-man? Skulking, I suppose, in some of those tarry old inns about Wapping, where crimps and pirates arrange their cruises, and laugh at justice.”

“At present, your Majesty, on the contrary, he braves the full sunshine, and is to be found not far from one of your country palaces.”

“The daring rascal! I should like though to introduce him to my friend Blood, who once stole my crown, about the time Nelly here stole my heart.”

“Fie, your Majesty!” said Nelly, tapping him playfully with the gilded sceptre of Persia.

“What sort of fellow is this Morgan in face, Rupert?”

“Well, not unlike my friend here; a gal-lant officer, who has fought bravely against the Spaniards in the Indian seas.”

“Does he dress well; or is he all flannel and tarpauling, like a Dutch skipper?”

“On the contrary, he is fond of splendour, and generally appears in a dress of crimson.”

“What! yes; why, it must be—Captain Morgan!” said the king, turning to his visitor; “the illustrious conqueror of the Spaniards, and the scourge of Panama? A brave freebooter indeed,” he said, under breath. “But, halloo! on one knee; why, man, I don’t look like a hangman, do I? You are safe enough here: and if we do presently have a sort of trial, and just slip a rope round your neck, why, it will be but a form. Take my word for it, if I do as I like, you go out before the year is done as Governor of Jamaica.”

“Down on your knees, man,” said Rupert,

“heartily down on your knees, and thank so good a king, who, if he were as—”

“Wise as he is good, would turn trooper, and pistol Shaftesbury, at the head of the Coldstreams; eh, Rupert? But the man doesn’t seem satisfied; he still kneels. Rise, man, or I shall think you a greater rogue than I believe you were.”

While the king thus spoke, Morgan had been fumbling in his breast-pocket, and slowly extracting a small parcel, that his nervous confusion scarcely enabled him to draw forth, and present with a bow to the king.

“Why, what’s this? See how Nell’s eyes sparkle! Spanish diamonds, I suppose; a sort of magnificent bribe to buy off the rope. What! a black box,—a little black box! Not Shaftesbury’s, eh? What!—yes,—Shaftesbury’s? What! the real box, and the deed! the real little black box, and the old fox nicked! Why, Morgan, you shall be my admiral of the blue, my chancellor, my billiard-marker, my—” And the king, to the aston-

ishment of Rupert, Nelly, and even Morgan, began to execute a minuet-step round the room, as he opened the box, and shook the forged deed in triumph in his hand. Gradually settling into calmer contentment, Charles sat down on the throne, and requested Morgan's history of its capture.

“Marvellously good! Trapped, by Jove! Little Sincerity boxed up, and out of court. Let my patron saint be henceforth Saint David, and toasted cheese supersede the omelette of Ortolon. By a chance shot, too! But, halloo! not so quick, Captain Morgan; that box, if you please.”

Morgan, paying no attention to the king's question, folded up the deed, shut the box, and replacing it in the wrapper, put it in his pocket.

“The price of this box, that your Majesty seems so much to value, and which perhaps may contain some great court-secret, of which I am ignorant, is a free pardon for all incursions of mine against the Spanish colonies.”

“I grant it,” said Charles; “so give me the box. Rupert, good morning; meet me in the garden in half an hour, and your friend here: the game is not yet finished. Till then, *au revoir*.”

As Rupert and his rough *protégé* passed out, Charles threw himself in a seat, and passing his fingers through his thick black curls, laughed long and loud.

“Well, Jade Fortune, I begin to love thee, after all. Parliament prorogued, and treason shut out at that door; and now this box snapped—another door to be barred up. Oh, Shaftesbury, Shaftesbury, I have thee on the hip, old plotter as thou art! Well, after all, Nelly, give me an old man of the world to hobble an old plotter, who thinks to cheat Lucifer himself, with his ciphers and bribes and spies and clubs. But now, Nelly, run and dress; for our court expects us on the Terrace, and we have the old traitor still to browbeat and publicly confound.”

It was just half an hour from this time, and a crowd of courtiers, footmen, and musicians stood in the courtyard at the foot of the great staircase, awaiting the appearance of the king—some yawning with weariness, others uttering fashionable oaths in sheer impatience. Presently the four-and-twenty fiddlers struck up a triumphant strain, which, considering their salaries had not been paid for a year, was meritorious ; the gentlemen fell into knots, and ladies ceased shrugging and whispering, as Charles, dressed in a plain and simple dress, slowly descended the stairs, every hat flew off, and every head bent. For a moment even Nell Gwyn and the Duchess of Portsmouth ceased to exchange angry looks, and the jest died away even on the lips of Sedley.

Through the cloistered quadrangle, under the clock-tower arch, and along broad terraces, guarded by huge orange-trees golden with fruit, and beautiful as that of the Hesperides, passed the royal train, laughing, jesting, humming suppressed songs, half-French, half-

English ; the king walked first, with a springy elastic step, swinging his cameo-headed cane ; now pinching Nell's ear, now slipping his arm into that of some favourite courtier, who, before perhaps unnoticed, from that moment became the envy of the crowd. There were mad-brained fellows there, who cared only for the carriage of their sword and the clean setting of their laced shirt ; but there were also Sir Politic Would-bes, who saw political meanings in everything the king did. If he stooped to pet his French spaniel, it was a sign that peace was to be proclaimed with Louis le Grand ; but if he kicked it out of his way, nothing but inevitable war could be indicated by an omen so terrible.

At the fountain the king paused for a moment, leaning over the marble basin to feed the Chinese gold and silver fish that flocked to greet their well-known visitor.

“As eager as courtiers,” said a wit in the background, whom Charles singled out and richly rewarded with a smile.

“But who’s this?” said Charles, looking up suddenly, as a group of some half-dozen persons advanced slowly towards the fountain from the part of the gardens adjacent to the river, and now known as Queen Mary’s Walk.

“Little Sincerity,” was the whisper. It was indeed Shaftesbury, who, supported by the arm of a friend, advanced with an air of courteous reverence towards his sovereign.

“I pray your Majesty to remain covered,” said Charles, with a sarcastic smile; “this damp river air is ill-fitting your age and infirmities.”

“I pray your Majesty,” said the old plotter, with a lower bow than before, “to spare your wit, and not to reproach so true a subject with infirmities which, although great, do not deprive him of the means of being useful to his sovereign.”

“Your Majesty is too complaisant.”

“Your Majesty is too witty for an old man to hope to cope with you.”

“Is it true that your Majesty is intending to turn your crutches into stilts, to mount——”

“This is part of the calumnies, your Majesty, by which I am daily aspersed. Would to God I were strong enough to meet such vermin with the sword, now almost rusty in the sheath.”

“Your Majesty is a complete *Cœur-de-Lion*,” said Charles, smiling and bowing very low. “It scarcely becomes a poor fiddling tennis-player—I think those are the words—to pretend to help so great a man to govern.”

“Your Majesty,” said Shaftesbury, beseechingly.

“Bulwark of Protestantism, guardian of our dearest interests, denouncer of Sardana-palus and all his gang, may I lead you to your coach?”

As Shaftesbury, in vain trying to escape from his merciless tormentor, drove off at the palace gate, Charles waved his hat, wiped his forehead, flipped his spaniel with his

scented handkerchief, and laughed boisterously. "Poor Tony," he said, "my impudence was too much for him. And now I have the box—the little jewel of a lying box—black as the lie it was made to hold."

CHAPTER XV.

THE TWO CONSPIRATORS.

It was a pleasant evening on the Thames, the day following the scene in the palace garden, when, not a mile from Richmond, in the nook of an osier-bed, near an ait long since broken down by the persistent violence of the current, a small boat might have been seen moored—a small boat, which, rocking to and fro as gently as a cradle, fretted among the nodding bulrushes, or grated on the wet silt that fringed the little island.

A sleeping man sat, with folded arms, silent as a statue, in the boat; now and then he woke, but only to sing a scrap of a drowsy

Puritan hymn, to listen a moment to the rustle of the wind in the grey willows, or the splash of a fish springing with a silvery sparkle at a fly, and then, with a muttered curse at somebody or something's delay, to refold his arms and sink back again into sleep. The attentive observer might have seen floating on the water, near where his right hand had an hour ago been splashing and playing, a torn card, the corners of which seemed greasy and turned down, as if it had been used for some gambling trick, and torn up in vexation at a recent loss. Indeed, a red cloth, dark with dried blood, wrapped round the boatman's left hand, would almost have indicated some recent fray, the result of a tavern brawl apparently, for the dirty white ends of the plain band that tied the rogue's throat were foul with red and yellow stains of wine and tobacco. A more hang-dog looking rascal surely never waited on a gentleman; and yet he must be in the service of some old family, for he wore buttons on which the crest of a flying fish was

clearly discernible; the sword by his side, too, hung in a livery belt of purple and yellow, indicated the trusty dependent; while the new glossy green ribbons in the old bruised felt hat declared him a true Protestant, and one of those adherents of Shaftesbury ready, as the humour went, to shed blood for the arch-traitor's cause.

The boatman slept on. Great crimson clouds came and went; the sunset fire burnt on the water: the fish, in the red reflections, swam like burning arrows, or scuds of red-scaled salamanders; every willow shone like the burning bush of the desert mountain; then slowly came the kindly glow of the twilight, and the trees stood out against the incomparable sky in dark nets, or sharp and clear as metal-work on the gilded surface of a shrine. Once only the man awoke, and that was to grope for a flask under a cloak at the bottom of the boat, to slant its gurgling contents into his mouth, then to fling the empty friend with a splash far into the river, and to subside again into a

calmer rest. He had lain in this intermittent state of repose now some two hours, when a smoke suddenly rose from the opposite shore, which was in a moment answered by a flame from the middle of the island, and the next instant a man, muffled in a cloak, and with his hat slouched over his eyes, tramped heavily through the osiers, leaped into the boat, and seized the oars.

“Drunken sluggard,” said the stranger, whose saturnine face and stiffened arm we easily recognize as those of Mr. Troutbeck, whom Sir Robert braved in the hunting-field, “up, for the Philistines are upon us !”

The man leaped up, half giddy with sleep, and flourished out his sword.

“Upon them ! Down with them ! Kill ! kill !”

But gradually awaking, and seeing that no greater enemy than his master was at hand, he sat down, somewhat ashamed of his inefficient watch, and stammered out some excuse

about his wounded hand, and the ill-humours in the blood.

“Sluggard,” said Troutbeck, “beware the grape of Eshcol; for what makes some men lions makes others only swine. It is such as thou who endanger our cause, and bring on us the Scarlet Woman and her leash of monsters.” So saying, with suspicious eyes he drew a short heavy musketoon from under his cloak, and examined its lock with the utmost care.

“The best plotter, after all,” he said to himself—“better than all the black boxes in the world, except the long black box, six feet by three, where I hope to see the tyrant one day lie. But what ails thy hand, Chambers?”

The man, cowed by his master’s rebuke, muttered, with surly defiance, something about a late brawl with the unrighteous in the good cause.

“Reprobate!—miserable reed on which I am condemned to rest—thy own cause, I wager, and bad cause enough. Some cheating

trick, I venture to say, thou foul-mouthed Rabshakeh, and for once justly punished. Wilt thou never rest till thou mountest the tree without leaves, thou child of hemp and son of perdition?"

The half-drunken man, with a surly oath, stung by these rebukes, and a little fired by his too frequent draughts, at this staggered upon his legs, at the great risk of upsetting the boat, and clutching an oar, swore that he would stand no railing, bad as he was, especially from a master who he well knew, fool as he was, wore a rope round his neck, and whose head was worth a hundred guineas any day in the week at Whitehall.

"By the living devil, and the hell to which we are both hastening," said Troutbeck, raising his musketoon to the level of his hip, "though I have a wounded arm, if I will not lodge these ten slugs in thee if thou comest a step nearer. Beware, dog; remember the old grazier with the ugly cut in the throat, found near Brentford, stuffed into a hay-rick,

and touch not one who has taken good care to secure his safety before he came alone with such a child of Satan as thee."

With a drunken stammer, Chambers fell back on his seat, and plying his oar with tremendous energy as a vent to his passion, swore it was all a joke, and that when the choler was once quiet no one could have a trustier servant than Will Chambers."

Trusty; yes, trusty as the pet wolf or the tame cobra.

The next mile was passed in silence; the man bending to his oars, Troutbeck occasionally taking out a paper, which he read attentively, or half-shutting his eyes and leaning back as if asleep, yet taking care at the same time to keep vigilant watch on every movement of his dangerous adherent.

By this time the boat had reached a bend of the river, and on turning it a sudden burst of music rising in the distance made Troutbeck look up from the paper which he was reading, "*Somerset*, 2500; *Gloucester*, 3000,"

and other items, apparently referring to some projected rising in the midland counties.

“What gilded galleys are these?” he said, turning inquiringly to the boatman; “my sight fails me in this bat’s light; but I can see, I think, a crimson canopy. Is it some city pageant, some swanhopping of the greasy citizens? One son of Belial I can mark, in his accursed pomp and wantonness, standing up surrounded by a circle of others, who seem to pay him reverence; he plays with the curls of some Delilah, too. This must be some prank of Sedley’s. Is the centre figure short and portly, with a light flaxen wig streaming round a fresh-coloured face?”

“No,” said Chambers, shading his eyes with his hand from the last rays of sunlight, “he is tall and bony; his face is dark, lined, and swarthy, and he wears a black wig.”

“What is that spot on his left breast that shines so?”

“It is a diamond star—it’s the Stuart!”

“It’s the king!” said Troutbeck, nervously

fingering his musketoon. "One shot now and the game were done ; one shot—they come nearer, curse on their pipes and whistles, their white-bosomed women and their scented fops. Such women are the canker-worms of the land ; such men the vermin that gnaw into the nation's vitals. O Babylon, Babylon ! one shot," and he tried to take aim with the short heavy gun, but the weight was too much for his wounded shoulder, and he dropped it into his sound hand with a bitter exclamation of pain—"one shot, one touch of a sure finger upon this steel trick, and in a spirt of fire Charles Stuart were gone to join his poor, headless, witless father in his Windsor grave ; but my old cursed, cursed fortune—always to lose the game at the last card. As for this drunken ruffian, I dare not trust him. Oh, for one moment with a sound limb, and I and Shaftesbury would rule the world ! "

By this time the royal galleys had approached nearer ; the banks of gilded oars

could be seen beating the dusky water into foam to the music of the four-and-twenty fiddlers, and a band of French flutes, of the Duchess of Portsmouth's special organisation ; that Semiramis being in peculiar good-humour this evening, in consequence of Charles having that morning presented her with the old palace of Nonsuch, which she had resolved to pull down and sell piecemeal ere it could be recalled by the somewhat capricious giver. There she sat, under the crimson canopy, in such a cloud of satin as Lely loved to paint, two black boys fanning her with swan's-down fans, and occasionally sprinkling dust of myrrh on a little silver tripod which lay at her feet. By her side stood Charles, playing with her ringlets, and tickling her little ear, that was pink as the lip of a sea-shell newly rescued from the ocean.

In front sat a court poet, singing to a lute, his music-book being held by Nelly, who, seldom jealous, looked upon the Duchess of Portsmouth as a transitory favourite, soon to be

forgotten. Two or three other ladies were busy casting a silk net into the water, others were leaning over the sides of the galley, or watching the throb and fall of the oars as they rose and dropped in regular and harmonious cadence. Others, who had picked water-lilies, twined them in their hair, aping the water-nymphs — attendants of Cleopatra on her voyage down the Cydnus—had not, indeed, their romping laughter and noisy shouts at the passing swans, who with kingly dignity reluctantly surrendered them a passage, have rather announced them as bacchantes on a trip to the Siren islands; or wild strolling players, as Troutbeck had at first supposed them to be, bound for some pageant at Hampton.

The conspirator, desirous of escaping royal notice, being at the present moment bent on a special errand in connection with a plot, all but ripe, desired Chambers to rest on his oars and pull under the shadow of the river bank,

there to wait in ambush the passage of the royal galley.

But accident betrayed him. The king, in a fit of playful malice, had just snatched a love-letter from Nelly's bosom, having seen the sharp edge of it peeping above her tucker. In the struggle to retain it, it blew overboard, and, skimming with the wind, was drifted into a pollard-willow, that leaned over the bank in a sullen despairing sort of way peculiar to willows, just above the nook of darkness where the conspirators lay concealed.

In a moment a boat had been lowered, and two of the king's guard had pushed off to recover the scented billet, that fluttered like a trapped dove in the entanglement of the willow-branches. To their astonishment they found a boat drawn up near the shore, and in it two muffled men, fierce, evidently alarmed, and one of them armed with a formidable musketoon. They had no doubt that a second Rye-House plot had been

detected, and that these were the red-handed assassins. In a moment they were dragged before the king, who, the only one of the galley's crew unalarmed, stood carelessly practising dumb fingering on a lute and awaiting their arrival.

"A Shaftesbury plot!" roared out a dozen voices, as swords sprang out, and the foremost men began to jostle and threaten the two helpless prisoners.

"Adzooks!" said Charles, "gentlemen all, withdraw, or the Lord's anointed, but lately rescued from this bell-mouthed blunderbuss, will die for lack of air, and the succession not yet established. Bring up the tallest of the villains—he looks the most gentlemanly of the two—and ask him his name."

"Your name?" said one of the halberdiers, nearly choking Troutbeck, who stood calm and careless before the alarmed revellers, anxious to show their loyalty and to distinguish themselves in the royal presence.

"My name, your Majesty?"

“For shame, gentlemen; let him free; don’t you see he is defenceless, and one to sixty?”

“Green Ribbons! Down with them!” cried voices in the cabins, with a general alarm at the rumour already current below that the king was shot.

“My name, your Majesty, is Gideon Troutbeck, of Troutbeck Hall, Oxfordshire. I have been out fishing, and am now returning to London, with a loaded musketoon, in hopes of getting a shot at a stray heron. Is there any new law by which this has become treason?”

“Adzooks, what fools we are!” said the king. “Is there anyone here who knows this gentleman, who goes out fishing with a musket?”

“I do,” said Godolphin, coming forward from the after-part of the vessel, rather flushed with champagne, and holding a cracked dice-box in his hand—“to be sure I do, or may I never throw the bones again, or win a cup, or

empty a cup either. This is an honest Oxfordshire gentleman, rather sectarian in view, and not unfriendly to the old rogue Shaftesbury, but, God help us, as far from treason—yes, as Mass is from my coal-cellar. Mr. Troutbeck, I wish you well; as for the cut-throat boatman, he has gallows written about him: but, Lord love us, if every ugly man were to be hung, why, by Venus, there would not be many of us left.”

“Well, I am myself a scurvy-looking dog, gentlemen,” said Charles, smiling—“so my honest glass tells me every morning I put my wig on—but ’pon my rep, this Godolphin isn’t a whit the better. His face is for all the world like an autumn moon in a Dutch fog—red, round, and no features. But night draws on—we must to Hampton, or these pretty doves of ours will catch cold, and lay their deaths at my door. Now

‘That strain again, it came o’er my soul,’

et cetera. Mr. Troutbeck, good night;

honest ruffian, fare thee well. I regret your detention, and wish ye well."

As he said this, the flutes struck up, and Mr. Troutbeck and his boatman were lowered into their boat. The great lines of gilded oars rose and fell, first silently, then with a splash and beat; in a few minutes the procession of galleys, now radiant with torches, had passed into the darkness. As the boat sheered off the king kindly flung his richly embroidered claret-coloured cloak into the boat, for fear Mr. Troutbeck should suffer from the wetting he had unavoidably received in his capture.

Without pursuing the boat's course stroke by stroke, let us pass over an hour of time, and rejoin the two conspirators, who have reached a small water-side inn at Chelsea.

Leaving Chambers to tie his boat to the mooring-chain, Troutbeck leaped out of the boat, strode up a narrow water-side lane, and entered the courtyard of the "Drake's Head," an inn of evil repute, much frequented by the

disaffected of the day, its isolated situation permitting it to be approached quickly, safely, and secretly, by water and land, unobserved by watchman or patrol.

A shock-headed ostler crawled out of the mouldy stable at the sound of a strange foot, but sulkily slunk in again on finding the stranger without horse or attendant.

The jingle of the parlour bell soon brought up the landlord, to whom Troutbeck addressed anxious inquiries as to the arrival of a Mr. Vivian. With his finger to his long capsicum-looking nose, and a twinkle of his little pig-like eyes, the landlord replied that the gentleman had not yet arrived, and shuffled off to get up a bottle of the "Blue Seal," which Mr. Troutbeck ordered with the patronising smile of an habitual guest.

Five minutes after a red-haired country wench bustled into the room with a tray covered with a clean cloth, and began to lay the table for two.

"Who do you expect, my lass?"

“Mr. Vivian,” said the girl, in a low mysterious voice. “He ordered the dinner a fortnight ago last Tuesday, and he never misses his appointments.”

“At what time, my girl, did he order dinner to be served up?” said Troutbeck, glancing at the clock, that steadily pursued its destined round of duties.

“At six.”

It wanted three minutes to six. He looked down the road, whose long white coils stretched away in the moonlight,—but no coach, no horseman.

“Conspirators like Mr. Vivian affect this mystery. It’s part of their stock in trade; like the mask and the dark lantern, it serves to frighten fools.”

He looked again out of window, and beat his foot with a whip that lay on the window sill.

“What wine do you take, Troutbeck?” said a calm voice behind him.

He looked round, and to his astonishment

saw a stranger coolly seated at the table, eyeing him with a smile of half malicious triumph.

“The Earl of Shaftesbury?” he said. “To what am I indebted, my lord, for this unexpected pleasure? I had hoped to have met Mr. Vivian, agent of Monsieur Barillon, the French ambassador.”

“Mr. Vivian and Mr. Ashley Cooper,” said the earl, throwing his napkin quietly over his knee and ringing the bell for the roast ducks to be brought in, “are one and the same, both gentlemen” (and he bowed) “being much indebted to the fidelity and sagacity of Mr. Troutbeck. But you don’t take wine?” (for by this time the wine had been brought in). “You were not always so abstemious; St. John’s, if I have heard right, once rang with your bacchanalian fame;” and the earl laughed. Now, nothing frightens and alarms a cunning man more than laughing; for he immediately thinks you are countermining him.

“Those were in the days of the old Adam, my lord,” said Troutbeck, with a morose and sour smile.

“Oh, in the name of all fair ladies, don’t begin to use Scriptural phrases; for when you do, I know of old you’re dangerous. Take some wine. This ‘Blue Seal’ is of an established goodness, and was once, I believe, in Cromwell’s cellar.”

“I never take wine, my lord,” said Troutbeck gravely, “when business is to be done.”

“Do you always carry such toys as that with you?” said the earl, tapping Troutbeck’s musketoon with the end of his fork as it rested in a corner. “A wing or a leg? Egg sauce? Thank you, Polly, my dear; fresh glasses.”

“The only true friend, my lord, as I have long since found. I am not one of those who in these troubled times are content to stand on the sea-shore and send others to sea; but I myself brave the storm, and try to bring the sinking craft to land.”

“All of which,” said the earl coolly, using a gold toothpick, and watching the face of the speaker with a half-puzzled, half-inquiring air, in which anxiety, though visible, was only to be traced by the keen physiognomist, “means that Mr. Troutbeck thinks himself ill rewarded for past services, distrustful of the present condition of our glorious plot, and generally jealous and angry with the world at large, and this marvellously good claret in particular ; *n’est-ce pas ?*”

“Before I answer these questions, my lord, may I ask what magic brought you so mysteriously into the room in which we stand ; did you come from above or below ?”

“From below, I know you think ; but to remove all mystery, by a sliding panel” (shifting a piece of the wainscot behind his chair with his drawn sword as he spoke), “which a good saw and a neat hand can render serviceable in any room in half an hour. To impose on vulgar souls, I sometimes use such machinery,

which safety sometimes requires, and secrecy often uses."

"And this black box, which you have raised our expectations so long with,—when is it to be shown? The clubs begin to call it a mere trick, and lament that we are not led by bolder spirits."

"Is Mr. Troutbeck the leader of this opinion?" said the earl, watching him from under his brows.

"The opinion of a poor country gentleman, the mere drudge of a treasonable club, must be immaterial to an earl who has the crown of England all but in his grasp," said Troutbeck, in a voice of angry humility.

"No humility, for Heaven's sake; for then I know your pride is hurt, and a man with hurt pride is about as manageable as a cow that has just had its calf taken away. Now, man, out with your opinion; nothing offends me."

"Then, my lord, I must confess I thought the whole thing a trick; this box is non-existing."

“But do not now?”

“No, I do not now.”

“And may I ask the *pourquoi*?”

“Because I *know* the thing to be a forgery.”

“By Heavens,” said the earl, half rising from his chair, but immediately resuming his seat, “if you do not almost drive me out of patience with your cold sneers and suspicious distrust! Of all the dogs in my pack,—bulldog, slot-hound, greyhound, whether for mettle, bottom, speed, or scent,—you are the most unmanageable and the most useful.”

“A Troutbeck a dog!” said the conspirator, rising and going to the door; “my lord, you shall rue this!”

“Why, Troutbeck, man,” said the earl, filling another glass, then rising and seizing the unwilling hand of his unruly agent, “this is sheer Bedlam to sit here and chafe and chafe till you strike fire. Remember we are sitting in a powder magazine, each on a barrel. Don’t you know I value you

as the truest friend of the cause in all Oxfordshire, and one to whom even a peerage would be a poor recompense? The box you talk of, by the most unfortunate accident in the world, has been seized by pirates as it was being conveyed from France. This has defeated all my plans, and put off the rising, already ripe for the thirteenth."

"Does the scheme for abdication still hold?"

"It does. A great Protestant procession is to be arranged on the rumour of a massacre of Protestants, as a means of secretly assembling all the Calves'-Head and Green-Ribbon Clubs, who are to surround the palace and seize the Tower at the same moment that the barracks are fired, and Somerset House occupied. At the same moment Monmouth, who has been lying at Kensington with fifty horse, is to march down the Oxford Road, and proclaim the new king at Thanet House. Now don't be bitter. That is my plan."

“One of your plans, my lord,” said Troutbeck, smiling with a cold significance; “the plan that you keep to tell doubtful and wavering adherents; or for the desperate and impatient fanatics who expect a millennium, and consider you a sort of fashionable John the Baptist. For these you have plots of blood and fire; while for safer souls you talk of the great parliamentary demonstration and riot of the mobile, which is to at once frighten the king, and make him ship off to France with his women, dogs, and fiddles.”

“What a Timon of Athens thou art!” said the earl. “Dost thou not know my dearest secrets? Is not this head at thy mercy? And couldst thou not roll it down the red gutter of Tower Hill within a week, if thou wert as base as thou art untoward? Who knows better than Mr. Troutbeck where every Protestant club holds its sittings, and where it stores its arms? Who knows better than he how many troopers the Welsh squires are sending, and how many Gloucestershire fur-

nishes? Are these webs of fancy that I spin? Are these horsemen mere knights of chess, that I move about on our board to settle some abstract problem? Am I some arch-fiend, Belial or Apollyon, working mischief only to increase the world's evil?"

"Sometimes, my lord, I could almost think so. But I suppose that dull brains like mine do not see the centres of these webs, and get confused in counting the rounds of the spiral ladders, finding not their beginning. Does the loss of this box, then, undo all?"

"Not it," said the earl; "no more than a ship goes down because the best bale of the cargo is thrown overboard. To-morrow I post to Oxford to agitate the parliament; in private to expose the abuses of the court, asserting the legitimacy of Monmouth, and begging time to collect my proofs."

"Not to-morrow, my lord, nor the day

after," said Troutbeck, shaking his head.

"And why not?—why do you shake your head? To-morrow, I say, I set out to stop these noisy parrots and perplex the court. I go to-morrow, Troutbeck, to the Oxford parliament, the Green-Ribbons shouting at my back."

"You'll not get in."

"And why? What minion of the Stuarts will dare to resist a man who has all London at his call?"

"Parliament is prorogued."

The earl fell back in his chair as if he had received a bullet in the chest. "Prorogued! And he dared? Let him take care! The cripple shall yet lame his prerogative; that may too limp for ever, while he goes begging at the court of the king who now pensions him!"

"It is a blow, but this may redeem it," said Troutbeck, drawing from his cloak the *little black box*, and placing it on the white table before the earl's astonished eyes.

"The very box, by the twelve Cæsars!"

said the earl. "This trick beats my sliding panel; you'll be pulling ribbon out of your jaw like a jack-pudding next! In the name of all that is miraculous, how came you by this treasure?"

In a few minutes Mr. Troutbeck recounted the singular accident by which he had recovered the precious box and the deed it contained. Before slipping on the loose riding coat which the king had courteously flung into his boat as the galley pushed off, he had felt something like a parcel of letters pressing against his side; and on pulling it out soon discovered from its contents that, by some fortunate occurrence, he had become possessed of the black box so long talked of among his fellow-conspirators.

"Prime minister of mine," said the earl, unable to conceal the exultation of his triumph, "behold the Pandora's casket which shall let out all evils upon our enemies, but retain eternal hope at the bottom for ourselves! Now, go set the clubs buzzing like hornets,

to chafe the aldermen who have been lending money at court. Now to issue out the dusty pikes and the unsunned doubloons. Now for unresting couriers, to rouse the provinces — to set Bristol on fire, and Wales by the ears.”

“And what day do you fix for the great rising?”

“The thirteenth — the anniversary of the day Sir Edmundbury Godfrey was found with his stupid throat cut on Primrose Hill. On that day, we assemble at the Calves'-Head Club in Crane Court, set the business going, arrange the subsidies, draw up the levies, and appoint our leaders. I must begone; a heavy night awaits me — but, halloo! what is that? Be kind enough to look, for I am still somewhat lame with that old hurt of mine at Breda.”

It was a sudden clash of swords in the courtyard below that had arrested the earl's attention. He had now risen from his chair, and thrown his cloak about him. Troutbeck

opened the window, and looking out, was surprised to see a medley of two or three persons, apparently dressed in livery, fighting with the utmost impetuosity. They tilted round the courtyard, exchanging thrust after thrust, and suddenly disappearing through the stable-door, which shut after them.

“Only a drunken brawl,” said Troutbeck, shutting the window and turning round, but the earl was gone; a slight noise below the floor only indicating the trapdoor by which the arch-plotter had descended. “His last trick,” said Troutbeck, stamping on the floor over the square door, which he now distinguished; and as he did so, he thought he could hear a faint laugh far below.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE CALVES'-HEAD CLUB.

ABOUT ten o'clock of a September evening, various groups of muffled-up men might have been seen making their way by dim winding alleys and obscure lanes to the door of a small, smoke-dried, dingy-looking tavern, with an inn-sign much like a gibbet, situated in a narrow court not many streets from Westminster Abbey. They could not well be what they looked most like—a congregation of conventiclers gathering for a prayer-meeting—because the locality was of ill repute, and not very attractive to the strict members of any sect and party; because also the hour was far

too advanced a one for the purpose of any religious assembly, unless, as was too often the case at the time of which we write, fanaticism were only a cloak for treason, and the meeting house were a magazine for French powder and Protestant pikes.

About the persons of the men thus apparently assembling for a common, and probably mischievous, purpose in a secret parlour of the "Angel and Trumpet," in Covenant Lane, Westminster, nothing, however, could be discerned to peculiarly excite the suspicion of even the keenest spy. All wore the low-crowned hat and feather common to the period, though some favoured more of the old, greasy, steeple crown, that indicated the nonjuror; while others flaunted a gayer plume, and donned the beaver with a cock and air indicative of higher birth and a better presence. While some slunk into the narrow doorway—where a sour-faced landlord received them with a whispered word and a peculiar gesture previously agreed upon—others pushed in with a

swaggering rakish gait, as if accustomed to peril, and either too honest or too abandoned to attempt to conceal their movements. Daylight and closer inspection might have marked broad toes and red heels, velvet and leather scabbards, gold-lace button-holes and serge suits, lace collars and plain cravats; but these signs of class were at this hour all veiled and obscured by that dark mother of evil, Night.

One more accustomed to the club-life of these revelling days would have probably at once set down these mysterious and notice-shunning men as persons not very well affected to the government, perhaps Millenniumists assembling for a howl of mad psalms and maniac prayers; nor would they have been altogether wrong, though they would little have discovered how far such a guess was from sounding the tremendous mischief about to be brewed by these men, on this night in the dirty upper parlour of the "Angel and Trumpet," Covenant Lane, Westminster.

Could they be Hectors, or Tityre-tus, or Muns, or Mohawks, or any such street-desperadoes, who at this period of civilization nightly paraded the streets, with a posse of naked swords and blazing flambeaux, to insult quiet people, kiss citizens' wives, break glasses at taverns, and notch unoffending people's noses—and why not? Why, because there were no sedan chairs filled with bleeding men, no shouting bottle-holders with bare heads, no wigs shaking on watchmen's broken poles, no puddles of spilt wine, no pale dying men carried in triumph, and bowing with a sickly drunken satisfaction on the shoulders of half-naked debauchees; there were no satin gowns borne as banners, no bells ringing for help, no rush of angry men in retreat or in pursuit. No, these were quiet, sober, dangerous men, their firm, strong step showed it; their eyes were bent downwards, and were malign, stealthy, and bloodshot.

Silently, but for the whisper and the gesture, they passed in one by one, and

without exchanging any further greeting, proceeded at once to the club-room on the first floor, where through the carefully closed shutters a twinkle of wax lights could be still discerned even from the outside. But these were soon extinguished; and in the dark, and between two of the number appointed as sentries, as at a masonic lodge, each conspirator, for so it must be confessed they were—entered, whispering the pass-word for the evening.

When the forty men who formed the club had entered, the door was closed, and double locked, and at the same moment, by some ingenious contrivance worthy of Shaftesbury himself, forty wax-lights broke out in stars; the club had opened. The most remarkable and dangerous sign of the meeting was the mysterious silence, preserved not only in the room, but all over the house. There were none of the usual tavern noises. No fretful bells clashed in discord from a dozen noisy rooms at once. There was no good-humoured,

important landlord bawling out "Score a pint of sherry in the Dolphin;" or "Pipes and ale to the three gentlemen in the Blue Parlour." No men reeling up or down stairs, no smack of kisses behind the room doors, no stamp of duellists' feet, no glasses breaking—nothing but an oppressive silence, broken only by the slow tramp of a watchman in the lane, and a splash of oars in the river at the back of the house, upon which the windows looked. Anyone half acquainted with the plans of such conspirators as these would have needed no one to tell them that pickets had been placed on each side of the building, to give notice of any approaching danger. There was a watchman on the roof with a smoke signal, to communicate with the other side of the river; there were watchmen in the street, watchmen on the river. No horsemen, no bayonet, no spy, could steal upon them without detection. They sat like spiders, the centres of a network of electric wires, and from far off the slightest pulsation of danger would

be conveyed to them, wary and desperate as they were.

The merest child, who had scarcely yet learned even the ABC of the human heart, could not have failed to see, as the light shone out and drove the darkness victoriously from the room, that a strange set of men were here knotted together in this den of sedition. It was not merely the drawn down, clenched mouths, the wrinkled, half-shut eyes, the furrowed and trenched brows, but a certain desperate gambling air of recklessness in each face, that indicated their character. Here were old Cromwell men, stern and cold; rake-hell penniless prodigals; tainted, branded refugees and outlaws; Scotch officers and Yorkshire squires; Protestant merchants and disaffected aldermen—the very knot and focus of a conspiracy as widely spread and threatening as ever menaced an English king. There were madcap young gamesters, scarcely able to restrain their open derision of any thing like prudence or deliberation; hot Whigs, who

wanted to fall on the king on his way to Hampton, and slay him in the very midst of his body-guard; and old wrinkled traitors, who had been in every plot from Venner's to the Rye-House. There were men with patches over one eye, who had for years never spent two days in the same disguise, nor slept a week running in the same lodgings. There were men thirsting for any event that would place unlimited guineas at their disposal. There were honest country squires, new from the provinces, intoxicated with London noise and pleasure, decoyed into overt rebellion, and foolishly staring at confederates of whom they were at once ashamed and alarmed. There were courtiers, half wishing to be gone, but afraid of making the step; men whom Charles, with all his knowledge of the world and its vilest and most hardening disappointments, would have been ready to shed tears to have seen engaged in treason. There were degraded clergymen, the vilest and most shameless of the gang, who, knowing their fall

irretrievable, wished "the estate of the world were now undone." There were landless squires, and courtiers whose names were an opprobrium at court, sitting there together with folded arms and determined faces.

The most conspicuous object in the room was a tall oak chair, with that black twisted back and those cane cross-bars so common in old houses. It stood where the chairman usually sat, but was now empty. Anxious eyes glanced at it, as Macbeth looked at the empty chair of Banquo; but no one said a word, though many glances full of meaning were exchanged between the guests as they took their seats at the long table, spread with a fair white cloth, one of the band marshalling them to specified places. But although the chairman's throne seemed destined to be vacant, the vice-president's chair, next to it, was occupied by a tall man in a black mask. The pale face of this mysterious leader of the assemblage was rendered more wan and sad by the sharp dark line of the vizard that

covered all his face but his chin and mouth.

At a signal of a long shrill whistle, the door suddenly flew open, and between the shining swords of the sentries strode in the sour, villanous-looking landlord, bearing in his arms, as carefully as nurses carry a child, a calf's head—the well-known mode of ridiculing the martyrdom of Charles then common in treasonable clubs of the most dangerous kind. A murmur of approbation went round the chamber at this emblem of sedition. The eyes of some danced with delight, while other conspirators of a sedater kind gave that droning kind of hum by which Nonconformists express their approbation of a choice passage in a sermon. After the landlord paced a still more villanous and suicidal looking waiter, with long greasy hair, sensual mouth, and red-rimmed eyes, who bore in a baked pike, with a gudgeon fastened firmly between the sharp grinding teeth of that river-shark. No one present was ignorant

that these fish were emblematic of the tyranny so soon to be levelled to the dust; and a low cheer broke forth, instantly suppressed at a wave of the right hand of the man in the mask.

Then, with solemn, deliberate step, the man in the mask paced between the black square of faces, and double-locked the door for further security, clamping it up with a silver nail which had hung by a steel chain round his neck. From his doing it with his right hand unaided, it might be presumed that he had received some recent hurt in the left arm or shoulder, though he wore no visible support or bandage. He then slowly resumed his seat, and standing up, looked round each side of the room, bowed to the window, bowed to the door, bowed to the empty chair, and blew three times his whistle; upon the third whistle, the forty sprang up as one man, drew off their hats, and waved their swords.

Ere the clash of the returning blades had

died away, the man in the mask, who himself was a type of the executioner of a misguided king, drew slowly from a small bag concealed beneath his cloak a little *black box*, and placed it before him on the clean white cloth, watching each eye as it rested on it with surprise and unrestrainable delight.

He then, with all the gravity of a Pontifex Maximus at an ancient sacrifice, took up a large, glittering, axe-like knife that lay on the table beside him, and divided the calf's head into forty equal portions, passing them round with a sarcastic sneer peculiar to the man, having first drenched each with a splash of red wine—probably meant to typify the royal blood that men like these had once shed, and were ready to shed again.

These preliminaries having been concluded, a deep voice at the lower end of the table broke the silence now so long maintained. It was again the man in the mask.

“Brothers,” he said, “the day and hour

have come, and the forty are met. The great secret lies before you."

"Stop!" cried a voice near the chairman, which came from a red-faced old captain, with a squinting eye, and a stammering, blustering voice, "here is a new member to be elected; one who has suffered much for the cause. By Jupiter and the honour of a Christian, he's a sound one—by Jove, a sound one!"

At the same moment every eye turned at once upon the new member, who sat with an ear-trumpet turned vacantly towards the man in the mask, apparently quite unconscious that his fiery eyes were turned upon him with basilisk intentness.

He seemed an old bent-up man, with long waves of white hair, which gave him the air of a Puritan minister of the old times, and a greasy black silk skull-cap, which came down far over his ears.

"Who can vouch for the honesty of our new brother?" said the vice-president, in a hoarse suspicious voice, as the old man changed

his seat, as if to obtain a better place for hearing, and sat down exactly opposite the little black box, and near the man in the mask.

“That can I, by Saint Peter and the furies! By Jove, sir, didn’t he lose one ear at the pillory, and weren’t five of his sons brought to the scaffold together in Vener’s affair—by Jove, sir, what would you want?”

“It is enough,” said a dozen voices. “Like us he has suffered, and like us he shall work the vengeance.”

“He is old for the firelock,” said his blustering patron, with a coarse drunken laugh, clapping his old friend on the back with one hand, and twirling his tremendous red moustaches with the other; “but, by Judas, the saints, and the forty thousand martyrs, curse me if he doesn’t hold forth on a tub as well as the best of you—if he doesn’t, smite me.”

“Is our great cause to be tainted by such

blasphemers as this?" said a thin, morose, saturnine-looking man, in a buff coat, three seats lower down, addressing himself to the man in the mask.

"Scullion!" said the captain, tugging at a rusty sword, as little really eager for the fray as its bully-master.

"Uncircumcised!" said his adversary, nothing loth, clapping his sword-point to his throat.

In a moment a dozen swords sprang out to the right and to the left; and there is no knowing, with such inflammable spirits, what might have been the result, had not a loud stamp on the floor, and a furious cry of "Down with the fools' swords!" from the chair, at once quelled all disturbance.

"Keep your blood," he said sternly, "to spill in other places. There will come a time when it may be well spilt."

"The earl! the earl!" cried twenty voices.

"The earl," he said, "ever watchful for the

plot, will be here anon. He is even now closeted with the duke; but the proof on which all turns lies before you. Am I speaking to dogs or wolves?" he said, looking fiercely round, as a hubbub of voices rose around him, and one or two of the more incredulous hands were thrust out in the direction of the box, tumultuously and regardless of all laws.

"One inch nearer," cried the man in the mask, springing a step back, and whirling his sword with a whistle round his head, "and by the God fools trust in, I will lop off every hand that touches it."

The hands fell back, and the fretting crowd resumed their seats.

"What means this foolish distrust? I hold in my hand," he said, opening the box, and drawing out a thin band of parchment, "and will show to anyone, so that I keep it in my own hand, a deed of marriage between Charles Stuart and Lucy Walters, establishing at once the legitimacy of the Duke

of Monmouth and securing us a Protestant king."

The tide of favour was now with the speaker, the eyes grew brighter, congratulatory whispers were exchanged between the members.

"All goes well. The clubs assemble in Aldersgate to-morrow at three, when the king comes to the Guildhall. At the same moment the flame breaks out in the provinces. At the first blaze of the burning barracks of the guards of this Belshazzer, our armed friends pour in simultaneously from Chelsea, Kensington, Bow, Clapham, Highgate, and Brentford."

"The sword of the Lord and of Gideon!" cried a dozen voices. "Curse ye Meroz!" "Woe to Babylon!" and other scriptural denunciations, flew round the room. In one corner a fanatic began to preach, with staring eyes and threatening arm. He was soon dragged down by some more cautious friends, who were afraid that his shouts and howlings

would reach the ears of the inhabitants of the neighbouring houses.

“The counties are awake, are aroused. The beacon is heaped, and ready to be kindled. Already I hear the breastplate and the pike and the sword clash against the steel-tipped saddle. The Lord’s people are awake, and woe to the oppressor! Charles Stuart, the days of thy wantonness draw to an end. The sound of the viol and harp shall soon cease in the harlot-houses of Whitehall. Fiercer hands than Blood’s now clutch at thy crown. The dead from their graves in the gaol-yards of England call out against thy Sodom, and the Lord slumbers not on high. Already——”

“Our posts! our posts!” cried the old man, rising up with a tottering feebleness, overcome by the moment’s enthusiasm, and stretching out his hand to grasp the speaker’s. “Let us slay the tyrant even as he sleeps.”

“Moderate your zeal,” said the vice-president, as the old man fell back as if

exhausted in his chair, and resumed his ear-trumpet; "it is not for such as you. Leave God's work to stronger arms and stronger hands. To you, Sir Thomas Golding, is assigned the honourable task of arresting the king's person as he sets foot in his carriage for the City. Sixty of the brisk boys of the Green-Ribbons, heavily armed—with sword, pistol, and carbine—will be with you. I particularly beg that no violence may be offered to the Lord's anointed."

"Smite him hip and thigh!" cried the preacher, held down in a corner by his friends, but foaming at the mouth in his frenzy.

With a villanous smile, Sir Thomas, a red-faced, white-haired, old cock-fighter of Cheshire, nodded and touched his sword, with an "Ay, ay," dreadfully significant.

"To you, Captain Bellasize," turning to the new member's patron, he said, "devolves the honourable task of firing the Life-Guards'

barracks in Gravel Lane, and taking prisoners the inmates."

"And suppose they won't be taken prisoners?" said the old man, excitedly.

"Why, then violence must, I regret to say, be resorted to. To you, Habakkuk Goodall," he said, turning to the preacher, who started forward like a maniac to hear him, "it appertains to harangue the Protestant mob at Temple Bar, to lead them to pull down the Papist chapel at Somerset House, and to clear the Abbey of its Romish trinkets; but by all means abstain from the use of fire."

"The fan is in my hand," said the preacher, breaking from his friend; "as I live, and as the Lord liveth, before to-morrow at this time the Scarlet Woman's house shall be a scarlet heap."

"To you," said the man of the mask, paying no attention to either the approbation or dissent of his auditors, "Sir Richard Cantelupe, Mr. Vivian especially entrusts the rous-

ing of the City—from the Barbican to Pimlico, from Charing Cross to Whitechapel. Let our cry be, ‘A Protestant succession! and down with the bloody Papists!’”

Sir Thomas, a proud, handsome-looking, young man, with unmistakable brands of vice on his spoilt angel face, merely rose, bowed, and resumed his seat.

“And what for me?” said a consequential-looking, little, fat man, with a great green rosette at his button-hole, pressing forward to the table.

“The responsible and onerous duty of securing the person of the Lord Mayor, and preventing the calling-out of the Trained Bands, when our brave boys set the steeples rocking, when the great troops of horse come clashing down through the Bar, and the muskets peep through the windows. Gentlemen, we must now to horse! One bowl of punch, and then we part.”

As he spoke the door opened, and the sour landlord again entered, staggering be-

neath the weight of a smoking china bowl of punch. At the sight of the fragrant smoke-cloud rising from this pleasant sea, the eyes of the younger portion of the assembly glistened, while the moroser and sterner men turned away with a glance of reprobation.

“Beware of the cup when the wine is red!” said the preacher.

“Punch is not red, and is not wine,” said the squinting captain; “so I have no conscientious objections.”

“As for this box,” said the man in the mask, pushing aside a dozen proffered glasses, intent only on business—for, next to the earl, he was well known to be an influential country gentleman, and the very life and soul of the plot, the organiser and subsidiser, the secretary, the vice-chairman—“I must return it to the earl, who will guard it as the palladium of the Protestant cause. But while I bear it with me, who will dare to again wrest it from us?”

“I dare!” said the old man next him, suddenly dropping his ear-trumpet, white wig, black gown, and with them every sign of decrepitude, and laying the strong, bold hand of a man in the full bloom of life upon the box before a hand of the astonished traitors could seize his throat, or before a sword could be drawn to punish his temerity. But the moment’s silence soon broke into a hell of discordant noises, shouts, and curses, as all the forty men at once cried out, “Kill the spy!” “Down with the uncircumcised!” “Hew him to pieces!” “Throw him out of window!” “Burn him!” “Lamb him!” “Cut him to mince-meat!” Ere these threats could be put in execution, young Churchill—for he it was who had thus braved the lion in his den—drew a pistol from his pocket, fired it at the lock of the door, which it split; and the next instant a mob of red-coats poured in, while more could be heard tumbling up the stairs, crying, “Down with the murderers!”

“Kill them all!” “Flay the dogs!” and other shouts of defiance and vengeance; the dreadful confusion being increased by the smoke and explosion of a hand-grenade which one of the soldiers threw into the club-room. Swords crossing and snapping, pistols firing, groans, curses, tables falling, windows breaking, turned the place into a terrible scene of bloodshed and confusion. Nor was all this time the man in the mask idle; for, breaking through the crowd, and blowing his silver whistle, as a signal either for escape to those without, or for fresh aid from some unseen quarter, he set his back to the wall, and prepared to sell his life dearly, his eyes glaring like an angry snake’s through the holes of his mask.

Through the smoke that filled the room the strangest scenes of death and desperation could be witnessed. There was in one corner the mad preacher, careless of sword-thrust and bullet, hurling denunciations at the soldiers who

tugged at his skirts, and tried to bind his long gaunt arms with their lace cravats. In another group lay the captain, mopping a sword-thrust in his side, and trying with stiffening mouth to swallow the fragments of an ace of spades on which some treasonable cipher was written. This was near the door, where the struggle was hottest; but further on, near the window, from which a line of ten or twelve swordsmen still kept the red-coats off, stood a group of reckless young conspirators, among whom Sir Richard Cantelupe was conspicuous, who were hastily adjusting their wigs, snatching spilling glasses of the reluctantly relinquished punch, or exchanging cool lunges at any more than usually daring leader of the party of soldiers.

“To horse!” cried Sir Richard; and in a steady line, five abreast, the young rakes forced their way towards the door, now and then a gap in the ranks being made by a bullet or sword, which the laughing gallants instantly filled up. Suddenly a cry of “Fire,

fire!" proclaimed that a more terrible enemy than even the king's body-guard was closing in upon the conspirators; smoke curled up over the cornice and oozed through the creaky floor-planks; here and there a hot tongue of flame shot out, and sank back again.

"The man in the mask—one hundred guineas for him, dead or alive!" cried Churchill.

"The game is up," said the squinting captain, fighting his way up to the man in the mask, who, his hair half on fire, bloody, gashed, but still stout-hearted and at bay, stood with his back against the smouldering wainscot, surrounded by a confused heap of upset cards, broken bottles, and dying men. "All together, lads, and we'll still scour the Philistines."

"Take care of yourself," said the man he addressed coldly; "my sand has run."

"Die, then, like a trapped fox," said the captain, heading a tremendous and successful

rush at the soldiers who kept the doorway, felling one assailant with his pistol-butt, slaying another with a thrust in the chest, and parrying several thrusts with his cloak, which he had wrapped round his left arm. A moment after, the clash of their hoofs, as the rebels took horse and galloped off, could be heard down the narrow street, accompanied by a pistol-shot or two, and an "Hurrah!" dying off in the distance.

"This is the earl," said Churchill, lifting a dead body from the corpse of the man in the mask; he lay dead across a soldier, whose skull he had cut through, steel cap and all, by a last tremendous blow, such as despair alone can give.

"Lift his mask. Travers would have got his hundred guineas but for this swashing blow."

"This is no earl," said Churchill.

He stooped and lifted the mask, wet with blood and drilled through the forehead with

a bullet-hole. It was Troutbeck, grim and menacing even in death.

“A great bad man,” said Churchill, throwing down the wet mask with a gesture of impatience. “So Little Sincerity has given us the slip then after all.”

CHAPTER XVII.

THE FLIGHT.

“A BLOODY business,” said Churchill to his friend Claverhouse, who had been by his side during every danger, as he wiped his sword on the dead preacher’s gown; re-adjusting his wig, and re-arranging his scarf and sword-knot, with the usual cold, listless air of an every-day courtier.

“Bloody? Pooh! Nothing. A hive of hornets well smoked out,” said Claverhouse sternly. “Pity there are not a few of the villains, though, left for the hangman’s quartering-knife or the gaoler’s screw and twisters.”

“Here, at least, was a brave man, fit for

better things than to die with such penniless gamblers and fanatics as these," said Churchill, touching Golding's body with his foot.

"Pity he escaped the rope," said Claverhouse. "But what have we here?" turning over a heap of dead, and drawing forth a man, who, gasping for air, pressed his hand to his side, then slowly rising, stood up on his feet, apparently not much hurt. "Sir Richard Cantelupe!" said Claverhouse, approaching the abashed conspirator, and eyeing him close with a sneer of the intensest scorn. "Behold, Churchill, a novelty, — a Cantelupe, and afraid!"

"Afraid only of disgrace and of the scaffold, otherwise as careless of life as thou," said the young man fiercely. "Let me escape, gentlemen," he cried passionately, "as you hope for mercy. Think of my name, my mother, my blood tainted! Name any ransom; name any pledge."

"All these results of rebellion," said Claverhouse, coolly drawing his sword, "you

should have considered ere you joined a gang of murderers like this."

"Spare him," cried Churchill. "He shall give us pledge of future loyalty."

"The coward goes not hence alive," said Claverhouse, advancing his sword-point to intercept the wretched fugitive's passage to the door.

"The brave should be merciful," said Churchill, stepping between the cold-hearted soldier and the poor dishonoured spendthrift, whose courage the fear of disgrace had for a moment paralysed.

"You have a woman's heart, Churchill," said Claverhouse, angrily. "Leave me to deal with this poor outcast. Now, sir," and he threw himself into a cold fencing-house posture of attack, "though I could order these men to brain you with their halberds, I choose rather, for the sake of old acquaintance and some pleasant hours we have spent together, to treat you as a man of honour and a gentleman. Draw, or, by the God above us, these

men here shall beat you to Newgate with their musket butts."

Stung by these cruel challenges, and seeing no possible opening for escape, Sir Richard Cantelupe drew his sword, and advanced upon his imperturbable antagonist; while Churchill, sitting down on a broken table, sheathed his sword and fanned himself with the broad brim of his hat, having first re-adjusted the rosette, wiped some blood off the white facing of his stiff-skirted scarlet coat, and flapped his jack-boots bright with a scented handkerchief trimmed with matchless Mechlin.

The duel was for life—to defend heart and lungs, and keep soul in body. The combatants had but two thin, sharp rods of steel, that clashed against each other, and twined and thrust with a deadly intensity. Now a feint was repented of, and converted into an inevitable thrust in carte; now a disengage was carried on into a passage straight at the arm-pit. All that rage, despair, and skill could

do was done by Sir Richard ; but at last faint, exhausted by the very violence of his attack, he gave ground, and fell on the defensive, as Claverhouse, driving him slowly towards a corner slippery with blood and encumbered with bodies, seemed to slowly taste the delight of the last inevitable *coup-de-grace*.

“ Stop !” said Churchill, stretching his hand, which held a full wine-glass of punch, between the combatants, in his usual rather effeminate voice, “ it isn’t fair. You should take off your breast-piece, Claverhouse. His rapier can make no impression on your steel, while you have progged his rose-colour coat four times—no, five times. He can’t tap you, man. It isn’t fair, ’pon my soul—it isn’t fair ; is it Lascelles ?”

“ No, it really ain’t at awl faare,” drawled a young ensign in the background.

“ He should have thought of that before he came out,” said Claverhouse, driving his sword through the left breast of his unhappy antagonist, who fell almost speechless.

“ Devilish well put in,” drawled Lascelles.

As Churchill stooped over him, and undid the dying man’s cravat, Cantelupe lifted his eyelids with a painful effort, and fumbled for something in his breast-pocket. Churchill, anticipating his effort, undid the gold buttons, and drew out two sealed packets; in the centre of both was a small red hole where the sword of Claverhouse had transfixed them.

“ Give that,” he said “ with a dying man’s love, to Janette, and this to my dear wife.”

“ He has fainted,” said Churchill, sprinkling him with water from a cup on the table.

“ The fool’s dead,” said Claverhouse; “ and look, you have given him extreme unction.”

Churchill looked, and shuddered to see that he had sprinkled the dead man’s already pale face with blood.

“ Mistress first, wife second,” drawled Lascelles; “ that ain’t right—’pon my soul, it ain’t right.”

“ We shall get a step for this,” said a third officer, looking round the room, as if estimat-

ing the success of the *coup-de-main*. “We have saved his Majesty’s life.”

“Claverhouse is so d—— ambitious,” drawled Lascelles; “he’ll never be satisfied. Let’s carry him now in triumph to the guard-house, surrounded by the spoils of these cursed ungentlemanlike fellows.”

“Look here, gentlemen,” said Claverhouse, “I’m in no mood for trifling; and, by God, the first who dares to touch me with his drunken fingers I will treat as I have done this carrion!” and he spurned the dead body of his enemy with his foot.

“Shouldn’t we try and do something to hook old Tony?” said Lascelles. “He’s doosed slippery; he’ll be off.”

“Lascelles is right for once,” said Claverhouse, knitting his brow, and striding from the room. “To horse—to horse!”

It was an hour later, and the grey dawn was just breaking over the red chimney tops of the sleeping houses, when a party of five

Life Guards rode up at a fierce gallop, with smoking horses, to the great gates of Shaftesbury House, which to their astonishment, communicated by mutual shrugs, they found wide open; a great family coach, gilt and plumed, lay broken down, like a stranded wreck, at the front door.

“We have him at last!” said Claverhouse. “Tower Hill shall soon behold another sight, when Little Sincerity makes his last bow to the rolling mob.”

“A scutcheon will look very well over the chief entrance,” said Churchill, sketching with his finger an imaginary hatchment.

“How the old son of Beelthebub will hobble out between two soldiers! ’Gad, it will be quite a sight,” drawled Lascelles.

“Silence!” said Claverhouse, “or, by the King of heaven, I will blow out the first man’s brains who speaks. Without an ambush we shall never have him. Here comes the man I have prepared.”

“By Jupiter, it’s a Calf’s Head!” said

Lascelles, half alarmed, in a very low whisper to the soldier who stood next him, as a man came forward, dressed in the very garb of the poor half-crazed preacher who now slept his sleep; cassock, bands, steeple hat—he was complete.

“Now, gentlemen,” said Claverhouse, setting the example, “dismount, and draw yourselves up in the street outside the courtyard wall, while Colonel Churchill and myself, hidden in this coach, watch the success of our stratagem; for we have a subtle rogue to deal with, and we must not be outwitted. There is no peace for our future sovereign, his grace the Duke of York, while this villain earl lives to plot.”

In five minutes the troopers had obeyed the orders of their determined leader. No light at the windows, no frightened face, no noise of jarring doors, betrayed as yet any preparation for flight or resistance.

With slow, stealthy feet the sham preacher passed up the low flight of steps that led

to the Grecian portico, and gave a low, petition-presenting tap with the ponderous knocker. No foot coming—nothing; only a long echoing jar in the great, blank, marble-paved hall, with its statues and Grinling-Gibbon carvings. Another—still no response. The ten minutes' weary delay seemed hours to the fretting blood-hound Claverhouse, who began to curse his foolish haste for not having ordered up a field-piece to blow the door to atoms, and storm the wasp's nest at once.

At last a slow, shuffling step was heard along a corridor, and from an upper window, slowly lifted, the head of an old man protruded, demanding who was there at that unseasonable hour, fretfully saying, "that the house was neither a madhouse nor a doctor's. The sponging house was down the street, and the midwife's ten doors higher up."

"Friend Zerubbabel," said the disguised soldier, "our cause triumphs. The club in

Covenant Alley waits for the noble earl. 'Arise, let us go hence,' they say; 'why tarry the wheels of his chariot?'"

"The chariot you see's broke down," said the old butler, "and the earl's indisposed. If you are a friend, give the watchword."

"Come down and I'll give it."

"I'll be down, if you'll wait till I slip on my livery; for I am getting my lord's chocolate, and he has rung twice."

In a few minutes the great hall door slowly opened, and the old man appeared.

"Ah, one of the godly, such as my soul loveth! The watchword? Bless me, if the runaways haven't left the great gates open!"

"Grey hairs are a silver crown, if found in the ways of righteousness. Bend thy head."

The old man bent his head to listen, and the next minute his throat was in the strong grasp of the soldier, who clapped a pistol to his ear.

“Blow out his brains!” shouted Claverhouse, leaping from the coach, “and keep the door.” For the cries of “Francis! Diggory! Walter! Roger!” raised by the old man filled the air. “Squeeze him tight, or he’ll rouse all Aldersgate, and we shall be overpowered. Is your master within?” he said sternly, as the old man fell on his knees and prayed for mercy.

The old man bent his head, and shook with emotion.

“Slip a cord round his head,” said Claverhouse, “and twist it with a pistol till he will speak.”

“No cruelties on so old a man,” said Churchill. “Claverhouse, your heart is a wild beast’s. Have you no father of such an age?”

“This is no time for womanish puling,” said Claverhouse, stamping with rage and biting his under lip. “Lascelles, your pistol.”

“By Jupiter,” said the young fop, “I’ll be

no party to such a cursed ungentlemanlike proceeding! Stap me, if it even comes to sharps, I won't."

"Well, then, if you're all a pack of old women, I must e'en put my own hands to the dirty work," said Claverhouse, turning up his hanging cuff.

"Spare me—spare me!" cried the old man, "and I will confess all. The earl is hidden there in the Cedar Parlour, with the panel-door."

"Lead the way!" cried Claverhouse, putting a pistol to his head, and cocking it with a frown. "A word, dog, and your brains are out."

With trembling step, stopping every now and then at stair-head or window embrasure, to sigh and shake his head and gasp for breath, till forced on by a rude blow of some soldier's musket barrel—up staircases, past rows of ancestral portraits, smirkingly indifferent to friend or foe—the old man passed towards the little secret study, where the earl was

accustomed to pen his most violent pamphlets, or to watch them secretly printing, and where it now seemed he had taken refuge as his nearest and most hidden den, to plan some mode of desperate escape, wait better times, or petition a kind-hearted king for mercy.

“This is the door. O God, my master! Master, but one minute?” cried the old man, sinking again on his knees.

“Not a moment,” cried Claverhouse; “it is on moments things like these turn. Use the butt end, men. One, two, three—now it gives.”

“Hurrah!” cried the men.

“I can see him,” cried Lascelles, putting up his eye-glass, and squinting ridiculously through the key-hole; “he has his back towards us, and is writing. ’Pon my Christianity, he does not even turn round.”

“It’s a trick,” said Claverhouse.

“No, for I can see his hand move. Such

a hand! Stab my vitals, it's as white as a woman's."

"It ought to be dirty," said Claverhouse, with a slight smile, his nearest approach to a laugh; "for it has done dirty work enough. Now, push altogether—with a will!"

"With a will!" cried the men, and the door fell in with a tremendous crash. Claverhouse's foot was the first to pass over the splintered fragments; he placed his gauntleted hand upon the earl's shoulder.

"You are my prisoner, in the king's name!"

The earl moved not, but gave a low simpering laugh as his wig fell off, and disclosed a woman's head covered with ringlets.

"Changed his sex, by Jupiter! Why, that beats cock-fighting," said Lascelles, with an astonished stare that made even the iron face of Claverhouse momentarily relax.

"Stolen away, as I'm a gentleman," said Churchill, as the sham earl stood up, knocking down the coroneted crutch that stood by

his chair, and disclosed to the enraged Claverhouse, who had thought himself so certain of his prize, the too prodigal bosom and pretty voluptuous double chin of Arsinoe, a French lady under Shaftesbury's protection; who the earl's enemies boldly declared was his mistress, though his Protestant adherents more charitably called her an orphan ward, intrusted to his care by a friend who had fallen a victim to the machinations of the Papists and the court.

Paying no attention to the cries and tears of the pretty woman who fell at his knees, Claverhouse, with a glance of madness, turned round, and seizing a pistol from a soldier, discharged it at the head of the old man, who, satisfied with the delay and convinced of the earl's escape—thanks to the stratagem of his mistress and the fidelity of his servant—stood by calmly prepared for any fate. He fell bathed in his blood.

“So perish the friends of traitors! But now search the house, every tile and every

plank, in case this old serpent may not yet have fled. It is a pity the mob should miss the pretty sight on Tower Hill."

But it was too late ; the earl had long since escaped by a secret passage opening into an adjoining chapel, from whence, in a closed sedan, some trusty adherents had conveyed him to the water-side to ship for France. His son, intrusted to Mr. Locke, had also escaped to a place of safety ; and his servants, careful for themselves, at the first rumour of the earl's disappearance, had already gutted the house of everything valuable, cut the rich silk hangings into lengths, broken up and divided the plate, stolen the family jewels, and, in fact, behaved much as wreckers used to do when a great Indiaman, laden with gold-dust and spices, broke its heart on the sharp tooth of a Cornish reef. Foremost among them was our friend Millefleur, whom Wildfire had sent with a message to the earl, announcing his abandonment of a political life ; the good-hearted, careless fellow having resolved to take his

friend Troutbeck's advice, and "bucolise," as he called it, down among his tenants in the country. His speedy marriage, indeed, was, some said, a more than probable event.

It will not, perhaps, surprise our readers to learn that Troutbeck's hang-dog boatman, Griffin, was the betrayer to the cruel Claverhouse of the secret of the intended meeting and rising of the Calves' Head Club; the result of the surprise and the death of the ringleader, Troutbeck, we have already mentioned. So ended one of the most dangerous plots perhaps ever concocted by English traitors. Had the Duke of Monmouth's heart not failed him, and Griffin not turned spy, it is certain that, in the then excited and irritated state of the popular mind, a general massacre of the Papists and an attack on the palace would have been inevitable. The lame earl, however, never recovered this terrible downfall of his hopes; and, plotting and scheming to the last, died a pensioner and an exile in a foreign land, his fortunes ruined and his name

a by-word. A more melancholy perversion of great talent is not recorded in our national biographies. As for the king, he laughed heartily at the tidings of "Little Sincerity's" escape, and swore that if he had been caught, he'd certainly have turned into a spider or a toad, and have got off. Incapable of much reflection, it was not observed that the merry monarch played his game of tennis with a whit less zest the very day the news of his escape reached the court. As for Griffin (Chambers), he returned to Jamaica with the rascal Morgan, turned buccaneer, and eventually bleached on one of those scarecrow gibbets that studded the sandy quays of the Pearl Islands, which his ghost haunted for many years, to the great hindrance of sailors who used to put in there for turtle and fresh water. The fate of Claverhouse and Churchill are matters of history, and need no comment of ours.

But can we conclude without a word about our hearty old friend Sir Robert and his daughter, who we hope are by this time somewhat

endeared to our readers? Troutbeck had not forgotten his threat on the hunting-field; and a plan had been arranged by him which fixed on Sir Robert's house as a convenient place of meeting for the Oxfordshire rising. But an anonymous letter, thrown at Sir Robert as he passed the bowling-green one morning, surveying the wreck of a walnut tree which Roger had the day before been beating, had set him on his guard, and aroused all the pugnacity of the old soldier. The letter warned him, as he valued his daughter's life and his own, to call in all his Cavalier friends or former tenants still friendly to him, and prepare for a night attack from a body of forty horse, without guns.

“*Without guns!*” cried Sir Robert. “Here, Roger, come down from that pear tree—never mind if they do spoil; curse them, let 'em spoil—saddle Black Jack, and summon all our Cavalier friends—sword and fowling-piece, and those whom God hasn't given guns to, tell 'em—hark ye, Roger—to bring pitchforks

—very pretty things for close fighting, and to keep doorways and guard roofs for escalade. And tell them, Roger, to slip white shirts on over their coats, as Waring did at Hereford, so we shall know our men all the better. And before you go, drink to the memory of the blessed martyr; and ride as if a devil or a bailiff were behind you, or Crow's Nest will be gutted, and the king's cause lost in this shire, God bless him! Roger, say, 'God bless him!' Drat it, if it doesn't bring the waters," said the good old squire, brushing a big tear from his eye, and hurrying to look to the barricading of the front door, and arrange for a sally from the garden gate.

In two hours' time, Sir Robert's friends came tumbling in—fat justices, lean justices, sturdy farmers—all friends of the Darcys, and haters of the upstart Troutbecks; brimful of love for Church and king, and contempt for Whigs, Trimmers, and Green Ribbons. There was great emptying of mossy claret bottles, and profound tossing off of ale to royal

toasts ; so that, by the time the hour mentioned in the letter drew near, the Darcy adherents were ready to have faced anything alive or dead.

Many were already beginning to doubt the whole plot, and to pronounce the writer of the anonymous letter some scurvy Whig, who had wanted to frighten the county, when Mabel—brave as her father's daughter should be, who had been up in the clock-tower earnestly peering into the uncertain moonlight, that lay pale and of a bleached wanness upon the garden wall, where the fruit-tree leaves threw a pretty patterning of shadow—declared she heard a sound of feet coming up the avenue.

“Gently, gently!” cried Sir Robert, keeping back the rush of half-drunken and pot valiant warriors, who leaped to their feet and seized their weapons.

The enemy could be seen now, dismounted, as, moving to the mere whisper of a muffled drum, darkly four abreast, they marched three times round the doomed house.

“Fire low!” cried Sir Robert, red with excitement, and flourishing a tremendous cavalry sabre, more fit to face a giant with than to decapitate honest Christians. “Second rank reserve their fire. Now then, gentlemen, for God and the king—one, two, three, *fire!*”

And they did fire; a storm of musket bullets burst forth, that struck down the first two or three ranks of the enemy, who staggered and, unprepared, fell back several paces.

“Fall on!” cried Sir Robert, tremendously excited; “give them no breathing time.”

“Hadn’t we better wait till they are more broken,” said a timid, little, lisping attorney.

“Don’t let them rally!” cried Sir Robert.

“Don’t let them rally!” cried our old acquaintance the horse-dealer, who had an eye to the enemy’s steeds.

Then, all at once, with a bang of doors and

a crash of upset tables, Sir Robert rushed forth at the head of his troop; Mabel shutting her eyes, having in vain tugged at the old knight's skirts to keep him where a commander-in-chief should keep, calmly in the background, to order, to rally, and to superintend. When Mabel's eyes opened the enemy had fled, were being hotly pursued by Sir Robert on Black Jack and a score of mounted irregulars, looking like ghosts in their white shirts and black scarves.

"May a poor Whig, on such a day as this, hope for pardon from his fair enemy?" said a voice at Mabel's shoulder. It was young Troutbeck.

"You wrote the letter that saved us," she stammered, blushing, looking for a moment down, then eyeing her lover with clear eyes full of confidence and undisguised affection.

"I did; I refused to be a partner in my father's crimes, though I fought for the same cause. I told him that I would die to save your life; he threatened to disinherit me,

and renounced me as a traitor. I have saved you, and I am rewarded."

"This is but a poor recompense," said Mabel, slipping her little hand into his.

"Hoity toity, what is this ; so short a siege, and yet surrender ? Why, Mabel ? Why, Roger, bring your gun ; here's Troutbeck ; here's the villain who is at the bottom of all this !—drawing the garrison off, and then stealing my daughter ! Shoot him, gentlemen ; no justice for vermin. Somebody knock him on the head ; I'm a little winded with the chase after those infernal Whigs. I paid two rascals, though."

"It was this gentleman who saved you. He is no friend to the villanies of his party," said Mabel, putting out her hand to push back her father.

"Well, well, my lass, if that's the thing, the matter changes a little."

Sir Robert began, in fact, to have pleasant dreams of the possible junction of the Darcy

and Troutbeck lands, and the return of certain broad fat acres to the old name.

“But, egad, sir, I’ve promised the king to give Mabel to Captain Morgan.”

“What! Morgan, the robber and pirate, the cut-throat of the Spaniards?” said the attorney, coming forward. “Fie on you!”

“I should be sorry to see Mabel married to a Whig,” said Sir Robert, wavering; “I never thought to see it, nobody ever thought to see it; it don’t look well. But then the young man is a brave young man, and a likely young fellow, and I owe him much, and so does Mabel; and as his black-hearted old father must be long ago off to France for his share in this rising—for papers on the dead men prove sad things against him—I suppose the thing must be.”

And the thing was; and terribly long were the old campaigning stories told by Sir Robert at the wedding.

As for the deed in the black box, a rascally Whitefriars attorney confessed to have forged

it for Shaftesbury; and all we know of the casket is that in some old country-house near Blenheim we remember to have seen a portrait by Kneller of Marlborough, with his right hand holding a general's truncheon, and his left pressed upon a little *black box*.

Nor must we forget our old friend the tutor, who had entered the service of Shaftesbury; but soon disgusted with the dishonesty and intrigues of that wily plotter, quitted his service, and betook himself to giving lessons in the "Italian hand," at which honourable employment he would probably have starved, had he not been one day recognised in Fleet Street by Sir Robert, who, at once forgetting all past quarrels, carried him off incontinently in the family coach to his old haunts in Oxfordshire.

INTRODUCTION TO "THE TEMPLE OF SERAPIS."

WE had been frozen up now about six weeks, when our excellent reader became suddenly painfully affected with snow-blindness, and was obliged to entrust his duties to Captain Beaver, who, though rather declamatory, and, perhaps, a little pompous, did full justice to the stories, and was listened to by the men with extreme awe and breathless attention — although he did sometimes stick at a hard word, forget a stop, or cough, to hide his forgetfulness or ignorance of a Latin sentence or a French quotation. Still—good honest soul!—it was a fine sight to see him, in full uniform, his buttons shining under the lamplight, taking

such kind pains to round every sentence, and make every point either of pathos or humour, that the ambitious authors had intended. Yet, being myself quietly observant, I sometimes smiled to see the listening author colour, or slightly writhe, as our captain, not the keenest or most acute of men, passed over, in smiling, happy ignorance, some recondite allusion, or felicitous turn of language.

Our audience, too, I could describe amusingly, I think, had I room. You may easily imagine there could not be a ship's crew of Englishmen and no odd characters. There was the boatswain, Jack Foster, for instance—a stolid old “salt,” who sat at the readings as if he was mastheaded—and, I believe, would have preferred the latter—but thought it right to set the men an example of being easily amused. Coster never smiled; but he sometimes shifted his quid, or took snuff, which showed he was moved. Then there was the “loblolly boy,” who was sentimental, and

sighed at all the love passages; and there was the cook, who, since the suppression of the paper and his sonnets, had grown bitter and critical, was rather severe on flaws of plot, and always stared undeviating at the reader, generally borrowing the MSS. to read again among the men in the 'foksal, and to talk it over and criticize it. Our Egyptian story, however, being rather beyond him, drew from him great applause: and he said it "topped the lot."

THE TEMPLE OF SERAPIS.

A TALE OF THE FIFTH CENTURY.

CHAPTER I.

ALEXANDRIA, in the fifth century, was the largest and wealthiest commercial capital in the world. Its population was as notorious for their seditious and fickle disposition as for their wealth.

The Roman empire, for several centuries crumbling to decay, had now been riven asunder by earthquake shocks, and from its withered limbs kingdoms were falling daily as numerous as dead leaves from a sere oak in autumn.

God seemed impatient for the destruction of such a festering mass of impotence and vice. The northern nations were for the most part now Christianized, and become fit agents for the second creation of the European world. The windows of heaven were already opening — the deluge had begun.

It was an evening in February—the spring time of Egypt. The sycamore was thick with blossoms, and the tender green leaf of the acacia was stealing forth beneath the cool mist already gathering o'er the night. The dreaded south wind, that, borne from Africa, blights Egypt with its breath of fire, had not yet come. Even the shore of the natron lakes was green amid the surrounding desolation, and beside even the waterless river—dreadful image of death, with its petrified trees and deserted channel—grew the almond trees, flushed with their pink flowers.

It was the festival of the great god Serapis, and Alexandria was gleaming with a thousand lamps, though it still wanted well-nigh an hour to sunset.

The revellers in garden and in hut waited impatiently for the cool dews of refreshing night, for the moon of Isis which might light the dance, and for bright Canopus, the special star of Egypt.

Through the long colonnades of the magnificent city poured crowds of worshippers, increased every moment by tributary streams from the palace and the cottage. On the seaside alone there was silence. No signs of bustling trade, no shouting mariners, were there that night. There was a cessation from carking toil, for Egypt was presiding at a universal banquet. From cityward over the dark waters came the soft breathings of flute, and lyre, and harp, and ringing laughter rose on the air. On the red waves eastward already shone the warning Pharos flame, high on its beacon rock ; gently o'er the silent wave

its gleam fell like the light of a torch on the rock-tomb's darkness. The westward waters shone bright as the jasper pavement of some genii-built temple of the god Ptha, and the rays of the setting sun formed a path of golden fire, leading from the sea's caverns up to its globe of brightness.

“Will he come?” cried a dark-robed figure, standing at the entrance of one of the numerous tombs cut in the rock overlooking the sea and part of the western harbour, as he stood there, half concealed by the strong shadow that the sculptured doorway threw upon him. “He is bound by two sure promises, by love and by honour. May the black angel Nubi blight him if he fail to-night, when so much depends upon his faith! May Serapis be his judge this night!” Again the speaker gazed over the waters of the harbour, glanced inquiringly at some passing bird winging its way to the distant surface of the Mærotic Lake as it stood out dark against the radiant sky, and then bent his

head in the attitude of one listening for a foot-step ; careless of the sounds of joy borne from the city, unheeding the rustle of the lizard that burrowed in the sand at his feet. " Zeus grant that those holy cries may come to the ears of the cursed Theophilus, like the south wind to the lotus flowers ! May they strike terror to the heart of the cruel persecutor, and bring anguish to his brain ! "

" Kaire, holy father ! " said a voice suddenly from the beach below him.

He started at the sound, but instantly greeted the comer, whose approach had been unobserved, and who now leapt from his boat and advanced with quick strides up some rude steps cut in the rock, and leading to the entrance of the tomb. He was a young man, a Grecian, as his features disclosed ; and his rich military dress showed him to be an officer of the Lion legion of the imperial army of the East."

" What news from Syria, Jovius, " said the Philosopher Olympias, High Priest of Serapis, for he it was who greeted the soldier.

“Alas, good Olympias, each day some fresh temple of the eastern gods is polluted by these mad Christians, who destroy the images but to replace them with the disinterred bones of those malefactors whom they worship. But a week since these eyes saw the frenzied hermits of the desert tear down the sculptured walls of Jove’s temple at Apamea, and still the god slew them not with his thunders.”

“And when comes Cynegus, the prætorian prefect, hither?”

“I know not when; Serapis forbid that the destroyer bend his steps yet hitherward.”

“I have much to tell thee, then, Jovius,” said Olympias, in an earnest voice. “A slip of papyrus, put into my hands by a Nubian but an hour since, tells me, by a trusty spy at the camp, that Cynegus is already on the march to Alexandria, and with him comes the Lion legion.”

Pale as the foam on the wave below grew the cheek of the young soldier, and he fell, as if struck by a javelin, against the entrance of

the cavern. "All is lost!" he feebly muttered; "then for thee and for Zoe I have ventured life—ay, and honour, more precious still!"

"I have much to tell thee," said the philosopher; "but this place is not fitting, though the time is propitious. Follow me into the dark chamber of this tomb; a secret passage leads through the catacombs into the temple; its windings I know as well even as the walks of my own Academe, and there the surging of the ocean on the beach without comes soft as the ripple of our own dear Ilissus. Follow!"

The young Grecian followed his conductor silently through a long passage, dark as night, and passing through a small room cut in the rock, entered another which was dimly lit by a lamp which hung from the carved vault above; on a rude table, formed of the painted cases of sycamore wood in which mummies had been deposited, writing materials were placed, as if some recording angel had but just risen from his tablets; while before it, on a niche in the rock, was a small bronze

statue of Minerva, of exquisite execution, which contrasted strangely with the sublime grotesqueness of the figures of the genii of the dead, painted in innumerable colours upon the walls. At the other end of the room stood a marble statue of colossal size, its features wearing a divine serenity, while a placid smile rested on its mute lips. The young Greek, nerved as he was to scenes of peril, started at the glimmer of supernatural life that shone from the silver eyes of the statue.

“These scenes of foolish mirth,” said the philosopher, pointing, with a frown, to the groups of dancers and musicians on the ceiling of the tomb—“these scenes of thoughtless life match strangely with the calm sleep of the dead, against whose carved shrines you are now leaning. Start not!” he exclaimed, as the Greek leapt forward from a pile of mummies, against which he had unconsciously leant for support, “for all life is surrounded, as thou art now, with forms and visions of

death. The world from the Rhætian Alps to the region of the Huns is strewn with relics of past time ; each pebble is a tombstone of a vanished age ; change and death are written on the cloud, inscribed in dim hieroglyphics on the falling date leaf, shouted by the roaring cataract, or whispered in the turbid Nile. From death youth grows to age, and age blends with death. Passions, opinions, feelings—ay, and even love—change ; and so even now, perhaps unwittingly, amid the voluptuous palaces of Antioch, thy love for Zoe has grown less.”

“No, by Zeus !” cried the youth, leaping to his feet, his eye outsparkling that of the Libyan gazelle in the outspringing of its hidden fire, and his pale cheek again glowing with a warmer life, as if some hot sunbeam had pierced that darkness of Hades’ threshold, and warmed it to burning ardour — “by Athene, and this her image, I swear that Zoe’s love glows in my heart as ever inextinguishable as the vestal fire ; my eye, turned in loathing

from the black-browed maidens of the Syrian gardens, the wanton damsels of the Roman palace, the blue-eyed, laughing virgins of Britain, and the bespangled matrons of Ionia, has ever sought the shrine of my inmost heart, where Zoe's image lies, and worshipped there ! ”

“ I did thee wrong,” said the philosopher, smiling at the lover's rhapsody ; “ thou art as true a lover as ever. I spoke of change, and I found it in heaven, in earth, and hell, but not in the heart of a Grecian youth. But the night draweth on : I know it by the dim blue vapour that fills the cavern ; by the slow burning of the torch ; already bright Canopus, ruler of thy destiny, is high in the cloudless heavens, and I hear the cool air of evening murmuring, like Pan's reed, against the orifice without. Tell me thy tale, then, Greek, so that, with the blessings of the gods, we may devise, ere it be too late, some counsel for the morrow.”

“ Father, I swear by the head of the em-

peror—and I know no deeper oath—I have little to relate, for my wanderings, since I left thee in the groves of dear Athens, thou heardst me tell thee and Zoe at my last visit hither, and since then I have seen nought but broil and battle, siege and onset; my life has since been a perpetual conflict, cheered only by the thoughts of Zoe, and by that wisdom that I learnt from thee.”

“Put like a lover,” said Olympias; “thy love first, and after her the divine lore of Plato.”

“So my heart places it. Yet, on Plato I pondered in the marsh and the forest of Britain, when we fought against the savage who feeds on his fellow-man—the painted Pict, more cruel than the wolf he slays in the chase. I have thought over the sublime mysteries of the ‘Phædon’ by the deep Danube, when we beleaguered the fierce Alemanni in their own pine forest; and I have muttered his ‘Dialogue of the Soul,’ as I rushed to battle

against the keen archers of Persia, and the savage squadrons of Tanais."

"And hast thou, then, seen those savage Norsemen, half demons, half men, who have lately spread over the west, as the Italian mariners tell us, like a swarm of locusts on the fresh leaves of the palm?"

"By Zeus! have I," replied Jovius, with a smile; "our legion did good service against them at the passage of the Danube. Misshapen they are, indeed, as the Hermes of Achaia; their eyes, black as those of the ibis, are deep-sunken in their heads; their shags of rough hair hang like a monster's mane over their broad shoulders. Yet are they very Centaurs, and their darts fell that day in thick, driving, piercing hail-showers upon our unarmed hosts. Then were the purple robed, and the jewelled fingered, perfumed linen-wearers of Rome driven into trembling heaps. Oh, then we cried for one hour of Cæsar!"

"And did no brave men hold their ground against these cruel barbarians? Did none

raise the eagle as did the legionaries of old ? ”

“ Alas ! good father, but a handful, amongst thousands. But, Hercules be thanked, I was one. Clad still in the heavy armour of the days of brave Julian, we stood firm, impenetrable as an eastern forest ; and against our dark mass of locked shield and bristling pilum they drove, shrieking like the Eumenides in the dances of hell, while in safety upwards of five hundred thousand friendly Goths poured over the Danube, and defiled on the plains of Lower Mœsia. By day we fought, by night we camped in untiring watch round the blazing fires, while the hoar frost lay thick on our dented shields, and fell hissing on the hot embers.”

“ Well striven,” said the philosopher, with a tone of enthusiasm worthy of the descendant of him who slew the turbaned Mede, and who shed his blood on the barren rock of Pylus. “ A brave handful ; ’twas like the conflicts between the naked Nubian and the river-

horse. The gods of Olympus alone could have saved thee."

"That Danube," continued Jovius, "was the Rubicon, the watery barrier that separated and saved Rome from the barbarian. I became a tribune on the day that the Western Empire was smitten to the heart, and ere a year was gone I stood upon the plains of Hadrianople, face to face with those very Goths I had helped to save—those men for whom the emperor had risked half his empire and I my life. The dreadful thunder of their rude horns, as they swept away our gilded ranks, still rings in my ears. I, who had come out scatheless from a hundred fields, had escaped the arrow of the Hun and the sword of the Persian, fell wounded by the dagger of a Goth at Hadrianople: As I lay half-buried under the weight of my Iberian charger, I saw the men of a thousand nations sweep past! and to my fevered fancy it seemed as if that great conflict, that the Christian says is to end the world, had com-

menced. There flew the Roman cavalry, the jewelled dandies both of the Eastern and the Western capitals—there trampled forward a serried band of stout-hearted Lancearii—then, heralded by a tempest of stones from the military engines, rushed by a swarm of naked Arabs, one of whom these eyes beheld sucking the blood of an Aleman, who had fallen by my own sword. In vain our infantry formed in knots, and, unsupported by the cavalry, fought back to back, yea, and for a time repulsed the Goths. In vain ; from the earth, from the very clouds, they seemed to pour upon our crowded band. Raising myself with difficulty from the field, and binding up my side with a slip from the robe of the Goth I had slain, I dragged myself to the assistance of the emperor, whom, though his rich robes were torn and bloody, I knew by his proud brow and the golden eagles on his sandals as he flew for refuge to the hut of a neighbouring peasant. Here the enemy hemmed us round, and here our small band

fought for their wounded emperor, and for their lives. Sharp through each aperture drove the arrows; in vain we tried to burst through the ring of spears. Maddened by the fall of a chieftain, the Goths piled fagots round our hut, and in our faces the keen north wind drove the flames, more dreaded even than the arrows. In vain we strove to hew a path; with a shout of scorn they drove us back with curses and prayers to the gods. Now one fell into the flames, and now another was pierced by the arrows. I alone escaped. Dropping from a back window, I hewed down a single guard, who had spared my life. The emperor perished like a victim with its garland on amid the flames. I was rewarded by the new wearer of the purple for my wounds, and was sent to Syria, no longer a simple tribune of the Lion legion, but master-general of the Syrian cavalry."

"The Emperor Theodosius," said Olympias, "is a prince who hates the gods of the ancient world, and listens blindly to those

madmen who tear down the temples and defy the majesty of Jove, who dig up the dried bodies of those who perished for their crimes by the gladiator's hand, and worship the lifeless corse of the exhumed slave. Those who embalmed these forms around us, who fought against Cambyses, or who reared the wondrous pyramids, much as they venerated the empty caskets from which death had stolen the jewels that made them precious, never venerated them as gods, nor shed the victim's blood upon their altar."

"I honour that mind that could look with veneration on the crumbling resting-place of the soul—the home from whence the soul once spoke like the oracle from its Delphic chasm. Does it not, like the sun when it takes its flight, leave behind some lingering ray of love upon its last resting-place, so that the mind of him who loved it may rest on it with joy till he also wings its way to the unknown silent land? Would thine eye, Jovius,

turn away in disgust from the corpse of thy Zoe? ”

“ Hecate forbid,” said the young Greek ;
“ but speak not words of such fearful omen.
The name of Death links not with Zoe, no
more than the vulture with the small singing-
bird that lives amid the henna’s blossom.
But what has betided thee, holy father, since
I left thee that day at the Canopus gate and
took ship for the Piræus? ”

“ My life, my son, has been spent, as in
Athens, in the calm reveries of a philosophy
more fit for heaven than earth ; but I have
lived to find that this dissolute age is too
corrupt for the renovation of the pure re-
ligions of the older world. I have laboured
to maintain the citizens of this great city
of the ocean zealous in the maintenance
of their faith. By voice in the council, and by
writing, I have openly attacked the Christian
innovators, and the ambitious Theophilus,
their high priest ; but, alas ! the sound of
some falling temple daily rings in our ears,

and we, too, now seem marked out for destruction. Slowly, but inevitably as the advancing Nile, the persecutor approaches the shrine of our Egyptian Pluto. The gods of Olympus turn in scorn from the pollution and the wickedness that defile the earth. The pure creed of Julian seems stifled by the warring Typhon of Christianity. No longer the world's altars smoke with incense; no longer the sacred hymn rises with the cloud to heaven; no longer the altars smoke with the reeking victim; the very earth—the visible—seems to have lost its power of bodying forth the unseen. The sun in its brightness gives no boding sign; the stars roll on unheeding; and the very birds of the heaven shadow no longer the unknown—no longer the dark secrets of the future can be wrung from the Hecate. The whole world is defiled with sin, and seems to wait for its second deluge of fire ere it return to chaos.”

“Blame not the just gods,” said Jovius, in a tone of mild rebuke; “that be far from

thee ; all may yet be well. An insurrection of the true worshippers of this Queen of the East might still shake tyrants on their thrones. The flame of war, but just extinguished, may still spread in a moment over half the Eastern world, and Christianity, driven to its cradle in the West, might perish in the very spot which saw its birth. The gods will look again in smiles upon the earth."

"But on whose daring head should the crown of the Pharaohs and the Ptolemies rest?" said the philosopher, musingly, eyeing the Greek askance.

"On the brave man," said Jovius, warmly, "who should spread the fame of his name from the sea-deserted cities of the Nubian deserts, whose banners should fly as the flag of Egypt once did on the walls of Hierosolyma ; while under it should march enrolled the fierce Arab, the warlike Ethiopian, and the subtle Syrian. Then, like a new Osiris, he might pierce into Europe, and, clearing Greece of the barbarian invader, make it

again a worthy dwelling-place for the descendants of Pericles and of Plato."

"A world is quickly conquered in words," said Olympias, smiling at the rhapsody of the young warrior; "but who wears this redoubtable conqueror's crown, and who is so worthy as thyself? Is not Zoe queenlike enough to become the royal tire of Arsinoe, framed of emeralds from the granite mountains?"

"Fair enough to claim place with Juno; but tempt me not, good Olympias," said the youth, beseechingly; "I am bound by allegiance to the Christian. Zoe is dear to me. Venus knows it, and Eros too, but honour is dearer than all the pageants that an airy ambition can picture. I set out to-night for Middle Egypt, whither the prefect bid me rejoin my legion, which is expected there. I dare not see Zoe."

"Jovius," said Olympias, in a deep voice, "thou hast dallied by the way; a swifter messenger than thou brings me word that

fresh changes have taken place in the Lion legion's march."

"In the Lion legion's march?" echoed the young soldier.

"I read from this tablet that a rich reward has been already offered, by sound of trumpet throughout the camp, to him who brings in, alive or dead, Marcus Lucius Jovius, master-general of the Syrian cavalry, at present absent without leave in Egypt, and who is suspected of treasonable correspondence with the Pagan faction of Alexandria, the accursed worshippers of the demons of hell. Read it for thyself, for it is written in the language that we both love."

As he spoke, he handed a tablet in the Greek character to Jovius, who read it, and dashed it on the ground.

"Accursed slaves, then I am free from vow and pledge!" he cried. "Is this the reward of life ventured and blood shed—are thus the base calumnies of a eunuch heard against the faith of the true-hearted and the

brave?" And he bowed his head in anguish at the stroke that thus shivered in a moment the rich fabric of his fortunes, and left him "bare to weather."

"Take it not so to heart, my brave son," said the philosopher; "'tis thus thou mayst judge of the faith of the Christian, from whom Zeus has drawn thee forth, that his bolts may blast them at a stroke—'tis thus that heaven seems to crown the prophecy of the unconscious sage. I could not tell thee till now that Alexandria is burning for revolt; ere twelve hours the city shall be free, and thou crowned at its head."

"Gods of a foreign land, hear me!" cried the young Greek, with the divine rage of Apollo ere he slew the Python; then drawing his sword as he spoke, he bent before the statue that seemed to regard him benignly with its silver eyes. "I swear by all the gods of Greece—by the deities of sea and hell—you above and beneath the tomb—to devote my life to the preservation of thy faith among

men." Then rising like a Pythoness, from whom the divine fury had not yet passed, he exclaimed, as he seized the hand of Olympias, "Father, I am thine, lead me whither thou wilt; but if thou hast deceived me in aught, may the curse of a broken heart and a withered hope rest upon thee! I follow thee."

"Priestcraft," said Olympias, appearing not to notice the Greek's adjuration, "and religion plan strange devices; only as one of the initiated could I tell that this very tomb leads, by winding passages, to the great temple of Serapis, where other scenes of glory await thee; for even now, under the garb of religious ceremonial and festival observances, the faithful of Alexandria are met to devise means to resist the tyranny of the Christian despot. Thither I bring thee, as the long wished-for general of our armed bands, after that shalt thou see thy Zoe, who dreams not of thy approach, or how near thy heart is beating to hers; and let us then see if thou wilt hurry off to Middle Egypt, or the region

of the cataract, as if a heart steeled by philosophy and proof against the weapon of the Hun were not penetrable by the kind glances of a maiden. Aid me, Thoth, for I bring thee a noble votary."

Then rolling up the papyrus, Olympias hid it within a fold of his robe, and with hasty strides, torch in hand, left the chamber of the dead. On they went, between long ranks of the embalmed dead, through rock passages still rough with the chisel mark, and vaults never visited by the light of the day—dim haunts of the dead, where the silence of the mute throng was never broken by the busy hum of the port without; a silent multitude whose dull ear caught not the sound of the shout that hailed each alternate conqueror as he shook the Nile land with the song of triumph passed away and was forgotten, like the builders of the Pyramids before him. Sometimes, in a dark chamber that the red light of the torch illumined for a moment, there gleamed forth from a dark corner,

brooding in the stillness and shining with a glimmer, a ghastly and unearthly glitter from a gilded mummy. The pomp of life seemed terrible in those eternal abodes of death. The young Greek had looked on all the forms of terror a battle-field can show, he had hidden those he had loved in the earth, but never before had he seen a body made eternal as if the dormant soul kept it still entranced. Now, clambering up stairs hewn in the rock, they passed through large chambers all covered with those hieroglyphic mysterious ciphers which no more disclose their secrets than the stars do to the stranger, where the ceilings were richly decorated with zodiac and planetary emblems, or studded with golden orbs. The walls were sculptured in relief with the conquests of the ancient kings. The sculptures spoke of a fame and immortality which the mummies beneath belied, as that great nameless statue did that kept stilly watch and ward over the dead.

On strode the philosopher in silence; the

flame of the torch he carried waving in the thick air which found its way slowly through this still Necropolis.

“These,” said he, suddenly stopping, and holding his light to the wall of the passage through which they were passing, and which, by its superior size and the richness and abundance of its sculptures, seemed to indicate its vicinity to the great temple of the Alexandrian god—“these,” said he, “represent Amset, Hassi, Siumtff, and Rebshnuf, the genii of the dead. ‘We are beside thee,’ they whisper continually to the soul as it wanders through its changeful state by dark rivers and barren plains.”

“They are grotesque figures, ruder than the Cyclops of Zeuxis,” said Jovius.

“They are but symbolical,” said the philosopher, “yet much deep mystery lies within those emblems so barbarous to the eye. They are allegorical, as many of our own minor deities are. The Greek Kratos and Bios are no more. But the next chamber will be still stranger to

thine eye, for there is the tomb of Neferbes, the first high-priest of their god, before which stands the ever-burning lamp that thine own Zoe tends."

Then entering a small chamber on the right hand of the passage which they had just traversed, they entered a small vaulted chamber, in which no decoration could be seen but a huge scarabæus of a fire colour, with eyes of emerald carved in the vault above.

"There is no passage here," said Jovius, impatiently, "we must retrace our steps, Olympias, through that silent city of tombs and its endless labyrinth of passage."

"A Greek soldier," said Olympias, laughing, "should be better skilled in strategy, for the Greeks, like the Egyptians, are a subtle race, and need wiser men to circumvent them than the yellow-haired barbarian or the blue-eyed German. Hold my torch while I adjure this god," pointing to a statue of Kneph, the only habitant of the rock niche, and as he

spoke he took a parchment inscribed with hieroglyphics from the bosom of his robe and scanned it hastily. "Touch the thirtieth serpent of eternity, and it yields to the hierophant." He bent down and touched the granite pedestal of the statue; a spring disclosed itself. He pressed it in with force, a large stone fell slowly back with a creaking sound, and a dark aperture presented itself that even the torchlight could not pierce.

"'Tis darker than Acheron," said Jovius, hesitatingly.

"Tush!" cried Olympias, "leap down, in the name of Zeus."

The Greek leapt, and in a moment shouted from below, "I am safe, oh, father, and I see a light in the distance."

Olympias descended after him, and, extinguishing the torch, closed the stone again over the secret entrance.

"We are now," he said, "within the sacred inclosure of the temple of which that honey-combed rock is but the necropolis." And as

he spoke, they hurried on through one or two passages lit by the light which poured in feeble streams through niches cut in the rock of some side apartments. A voice from a radiant side chamber arrested them—the words as of a prayer. It was the voice of Zoe, and sweeter to the ears of Jovius than the nightingale of his own Attica.

Jovius would have rushed in and clasped her in his arms, but Olympias arrested him.

“A holier duty,” he whispered, “awaits thee. Ares, and not Eros, is thy deity to-night. Take a last look, and pass in silence.”

“Again the lover gazed a look of such intensity that his very soul seemed for a moment to have left his immovable form, and to be fluttering round his second self—his long unseen—his Zoe.

The maiden on whom he gazed was bending over a richly-sculptured alabaster sarcophagus, on which the rich dark flood of her tresses, released from their jewelled band, had fallen

in the ardour of her prayer to the deity, before whose shrine the lamp burnt dimly. From her parted lips gushed forth the half-audible words in the soft music of his dear native land. It was a prayer for him.

Delicious sounds, they fell on the father's and the lover's ears like the summer-dew upon the lotus cup. Zoe's features, finely chiselled and spiritual in outline, showed traces of her Grecian origin, while the lustrous brightness of her dark eyes, fringed with the broad sweeping fringe of lash, resembled more the voluptuous beauty of her Egyptian mother, a native of the city of Memphis. With a deep sigh, the Egyptian maiden arose from her knees, murmuring her lover's name, as for a moment she turned her gaze musingly on the darkness of the vaulted passage. How near were the guardian genii of her life! Her face, half illumined by the lamp, shone with a radiance as of some good genius freed from "this muddy vesture of decay." How unfitting a place,

the home of the dead, for one so fair and pure; how unfit a halo for so pure an angel—a being less of earth than heaven; how terrible to see the vapours of that grave enshrouding that form before the time; and yet to the poets, and therefore to the lover's eye—for is not love the very life-essence of poetry?—she seemed like a soul that had freed itself from its dark corporeal husk, and was about, all glorified, to soar upward from the tomb to heaven.

Olympias whispered in the ear of Jovius, “Hasten, for the time draweth on, and the Christian sleeps not when the cross is raised.” Again they set forth on their way through devious and half-lit passages and stairs hewn in the rock, where the fading light of day waged incessant war with night; some of the pillared halls lay in deep masses of shadow, while in others the dim brown light seemed to glimmer like the dawn. The Greek now observed that the passages, halls, and chambers grew more richly

adorned with sculptures and paintings, and amongst the emblems on the walls he observed more frequently those genii of the dead over whom Serapis rules, intermixed with the cow of Isis, the hawk of Osiris, and the Nile beetle, the peculiar hieroglyphic of Kneph, god of fire.

“How endless seem the passages of this great shrine of a strange religion,” said the Greek youth, as, passing through a large hall supported by pillars, beautiful with their lotus capitals, they ascended a staircase and entered a circular gallery, which seemed to traverse the whole length of the temple.

“This great passage,” said the philosopher, “which resembles our life, for it begins and ends in darkness, leads to the ‘great hall of the gods,’ where the golden statue of Serapis himself is throned. By the distant murmuring, that sound of human voices that nothing in dead nature resembles, I conjecture the council is already assembled, and waiteth but for me.”

A small antechamber, branching from the passage, led at once into the great hall, in which the worshippers of Serapis had assembled.

Jovius veiled his eyes for an instant, dazzled at the brilliancy of a hundred cressets that hung from the carved roof, and threw into deep shade the capitals of the sculptured pillars, round whose fluted shafts the Nile bulrush and the lotus twined, as if turned to stone by some mystic power. Before a wide vail of Tyrian purple, that probably shrouded from profane gaze the statue of the deity, sat those adherents to the old faith who still refused to bend before the altars of a new creed. Men of all nations were there : priests, nobles, and merchants, whom the hatred of the new creed, or their fears for the old one, had driven to take desperate counsel. Deep-lined faces were there, for scorn and hatred were abroad, and they whispered, with heads bent together, as if they dreaded even the very god breathing their secrets to heaven.

So wrapt were they in their deliberations, that they saw not the philosopher till he stood amongst them. With an indefinable feeling, and therefore with greater awe, Jovius beheld the muttering conspirators seated beneath that dark curtain, which undulated with the night wind that stole through the avenues and courts of the great temple. To his excited imagination, voices seemed whispering behind its folds, and beneath its shadow moved a deeper golden shade, as of a being not of earth. Even in this hour of need he thought how dreadful it was for Zoe to move among scenes filled with that supernatural horror that pervades only the dreams of the madman. The dress of the Greek arrested their attention, which the entrance of Olympias, who was clad as an Egyptian, had failed to elicit. One, who appeared from his vestments to be a priest, arose.

“Brave friends,” said Olympias, “I bring thee one who, if he knows not by their

Egyptian names the hidden one and the leader of the heaven, venerates them not the less. I bring ye Jovius, the brave tribune of the Lion legion, of whose valour I spoke at the opening of the feast ; when he left the army of the Prætorian Prefect at Damascus, he was master-general of the cavalry of Syria ; he is now a hounded fugitive as one of us."

"And of what fresh cruelties of the tyrant Theodosius brings he word ?" said a dark-browed priest, who had started up at their approach. "Whither shall the worshippers of the gods fly from those accursed monks, who drive us from our very shrines ? May Kneph wither them with his breath !"

"Talk not of flying," cried Olympias, with a contemptuous glance at the saturnine countenance of the speaker ; "Jovius brings word that the army of the destroyer is already on its march to the city that queens it over sea and river, the great worshipper of holy Serapis, whose image is amongst us. To

arms, then, to defend our shrines from pollution and destruction! When, to the mind of the wise, the great secret of the universe lies hidden in impenetrable darkness, is the religion of an Israelitish fisherman to lord it over the creeds whose hoary majesty has been worshipped by a thousand ages? — before whom the great Hermes may have bent myriads of years ago? With the uninquiring faith of the poor boatmen of to-day, the new belief is rejected by the very land of slaves who gave it birth, the old needs but the warm ray of an emperor's toleration to fill its aged veins with the life of youth. The old path is tried and trodden; the new is perilous and unknown. In the past ages, when Osiris reigned in the hearts of all—great swayer of the sceptre of the universe! —the world prospered, and the Pharaohs spread their name in nations known only to us by the legend of the traveller. Now, o'er the doubting earth, spread terrors, panic, fear, and a ghastly train of pestilence and

death. From their dark, cold homes in the frozen north, Typhon, for the first time dominant over the genii of good, leads forth his armies, half monsters, half demons, who give up these Christians to deaths befitting the accursed nature of their creed, their midnight murders, and their ceremonies borrowed from our own pure faith."

"Olympias has well spoken," cried a Nubian, whose white turban threw a wan shadow on his dusky features; "our very sacrifices are prohibited; and the despot who sees misery wasting our earth, forbids us now to seek a higher protector in heaven. No longer at night dare we feed the sacred crocodiles of the Mærotis; our very mysteries are polluted by the rude shoutings of the Christian banquet, or by the profane intrusion of the monk whose brain is maddened by dwelling among the tombs; no longer may we pour out the rich libation; no longer cover our head with the sacred garland; no longer seek the will of the gods by omens and the slaughtered vic-

tim. But yesterday, by a decree of the cruel Theophilus, a fine of twenty-five pounds of gold reduced me to beggary; and by such means is the worship of skulls and bones, and the blood of gladiators, spread amongst a slavish race, who are too cowardly and lily-hearted to draw the sword in defence of a faith which at least they love, but the help of whose gods they want courage to implore."

The Egyptian priest was about to reply to this taunt, and groped for something in the folds of his robe; but a Roman noble rose, and the priests sat down silently, hurling looks of defiance at each other, and awaiting the words of the new speaker.

"It is in Rome chiefly," said he who had risen, "that the vices of an iron age have paved the way for such a creed as this. The proud Anician family engrosses the power of an absent emperor, and shares it with the Christian bishop; leagued as the vulture is with the lion, they band to chase down virtue, while a nation of cowardly beggars feeds on

the public alms. Their worthy descendants of late, forsooth, gloat over their piled treasuries, now sell a farm for a jewel, and now a jewel for a farm, and rolling in chariots through the city, to show their embroidered robes to the gaping crowds, look with exultation at their own gilded images, rearing high above that of the despised Jupiter. Guarded by their armies of slaves from the rays of the sun, which fails to pierce the rich embroidery of their canopies, they appear like the parasites who clogged the heels of a Nero and a Heliogabalus, rather than the descendants of those who died before the walls of Carthage——”

“Or at Cannæ,” said the Nubian, fiercely, who had listened impatiently to the harangue, and clutched a dagger that lay beside him, as if ready to do battle for the justice of his taunt.

“This is no time for brawling,” said Olympias; “nor should the blood of worshippers be shed before the altar of that god

who will judge our souls at the inevitable hour—who knows how soon! No time is this for delay; before to-morrow Cynegus may be here, and this great fane, fit for the worship of a nation, may share the fate of Apamea, be polluted by the loathsome hands of the Christian monks. Let the god decide on whom the office of general shall fall; but who is fitter than this young Grecian warrior, whose sword has been drawn in half the regions of the world? Let the god assent if he accord. Hear!”

There was an instant's silence, for from behind the veil came a roar deep as the herald of the earthquake, which reverberated through the chambers of the rock like some dreadful summons to the dead.

“The god wills it!” cried the multitude.
“Hail, Jovius, favoured of Serapis.”

No time had the Greek to reply to the acclamations of the crowd, for at that moment an Egyptian, whose dress betokened him to be

a priest, though of an inferior order, rushed in with a terror-stricken face.

“An imperial fleet has just rounded the Pharos!” he cried. “To arms! to arms!”

A cloud fell on every face, so suddenly had the gods seemed to have anticipated the thoughts of their hearts. In a tumultuous throng they poured out, and gazed, from the lofty hill on which the temple stood proudly with its pedestal of a hundred steps, upon the harbour. Beneath all was dark as a black ocean, save where the torches of sixty galleys lit the darkness. Remaining but for a moment, with features fixed as if some Gorgon's head had turned him to stone where he stood, Jovius rushed forth far from that terrible chamber and the presence of the god into the cold night air without. He found the silent groups gathered in knots on the wide giant stairs that led from the city below to the rich sculptured gateway of the temple. Its pyramidal and massive front was feebly lit by the stars of a moonless night, and its fifty

columns looked colossal in the deep masses of shade in which they lay half-hid, like the great patriarchs of some primeval forest. For a moment his eyes rested only on the passions painted on the faces of those amid whom he stood; he was afraid to look down to the point to which Olympias pointed silently; he knew that there was a sight that would sear his brain. With averted eyes he gazed—with averted face—on the winged globe, cut deeply in the centre of the square doorway, and illumined by the torch he held. The shrill note of a clarion, sounding clear and distinct through the night air, as if intended for his ear, rang out shrilly. It was the signal for landing. He looked. As in some terrible dream he saw the well-known legion pour from their galleys on the sandy shore; they have landed, and are forming in marching order. By the light of a hundred torches his straining eyeballs can see one, who must be the hated Cynegus, at their head, with the standard-bearer who fought so well at

Hadrianople beside him. His gilded and embossed armour glistens in the torchlight. He fancies he can hear the words of command, and even his own name whispered in execration; for the first time he feels like a branded helot gazing from a lurking-place upon his pursuers. Again their shrill music mounts up to that temple's summit. They march on, they defile through the streets of pillars, they halt and pitch their standards in the great market-place of the city, beneath the palace of the archbishop. The tall shadows of the city roofs hid them from their sight. There was a silence of fear among those gazers; a hush as when some terrible thing has passed before the eye, and the shadow of its darkness, like the ripple of a vessel's wake, is still amongst us.

Olympias, calmer than the rest, first broke a silence more awful than even the clamour of onset.

"They go," he said, "to proclaim the

imperial decree to the people in the forum."

"It may be tidings of toleration," said a meek-featured man, who appeared to be a merchant, and who trembled either with fear or the chilly night breeze from the sea.

"The mercy," said the priest, with a sneer, "yes—that the vulture shows the sea swallow. But let us hasten down, that we may at least know and prepare for the worst; our adherents will throng thither, for I see them already yonder, hastening to the broad marketplace."

With shouts of approbation they hurried down the hundred steps that led from the temple to the city, and were soon threading their way through the broad street of pillars that led to the forum, beyond the other end of which spread the wide Mediterranean.

"Cover thy head," said the philosopher to Jovius; and he whispered, "Throw off that guilty look, for see the gods smile upon thy sacrifice." A meteor shot across the sky as he

spoke, and seemed to bound from the depths of infinity into the ocean. "The gods speak to thee," he cried, stopping for a moment, and pointing with extended hand to the dark sky, while his eye rested with a wild light on the Greek, "so bright will be thy career."

"And so short?" replied Jovius, with a sigh, as of distrustful sorrow.

"Veil thy head," said Olympias, "and hide thy Grecian armour, for here is the forum; and see, yonder is the imperial herald about to read the imperial decree to the vast throngs that surround us."

The blast of a trumpet proclaimed the approach of the herald; in a moment the stirring hum of that multitude had lulled into silence.

"To the people of Alexandria the Emperor Theodosius, in the name of Jesus and the saints, sends greeting. On the receipt of this decree, he commands Cynegus, Prefect of the East, attended by the Lion and Gallic legions, to destroy the temple of the idol god

Serapis, and to confiscate the riches of its treasury to further the Christian cause. People of Alexandria, in the name of all the saints of Egypt, farewell." There was a wild outburst of rage; but it lulled for a moment as the herald's trumpet again rang forth: "The Prefect Cynegus offers two pounds of gold to him who brings to the camp of Alexandria the head of the fugitive Jovius, late master-general of the Syrian horse." Amid the surging multitude Cynegus, a voluptuous-looking and effeminate noble, conspicuous by his white cheek and richly embroidered robe, whispered for a moment to the officers that surrounded him; and then pushing his horse a little forward, waved his hand to the people, whose swelling roar seemed to bode a coming storm.

"To the temple, to the temple!" they cried.

"People of Alexandria," said the prefect, in a pompous but affected voice, "I demand your assistance in this holy work. I entreat

you, in the name of the emperor, to surrender the rebel Jovius, who, I am told, harbours amongst you."

"Down with the cursed eunuch of the palace!" cried the multitude, as they swayed backwards and forwards in their rage, only restrained by the presence of the legion and its hedge of spears. Louder grew the cries, and fiercer the shouts of seditious rage; missiles darkened the air, and the mob shouted and howled like a monster impatient for blood. Cynegeus's pale cheek darkened as a tile struck him on the brow; raising his jewelled hand to the wound, he shouted to the legion, but his voice could not be heard amid the clamour of ten thousand yelling tongues. Again he shouted, and at the word the lances of the legionaries flashed like sunbeams in the torchlight as they lowered them, and slowly drove back the multitude; while, at the same moment, some Roman slingers, aided by archers, poured their stones and shafts on the dark boiling mass that lay before them. The

mob stood but for a moment, then wavered, and the square was clear; with slow steps the legion followed the fugitives, as shouting, "To the temple, the temple!" they fled, with cries of rage and terror, through the streets of the great city of the Macedonian Conqueror.

Borne along by the flying army, Jovius was for a moment separated from Olympias, but rejoined him as he entered the dark avenues of the temple. Already, from the secret armouries, arms had been distributed to the frantic crowd. Conspicuous among them all stood Heredf, the priest of Serapis, who, armed with an Ethiopian war-axe, marshalled the fugitives as they entered the temple. Already an armed band were stationed to guard each avenue of the thirty doorways. Here a band of archers lay on the steps, waiting for the conflict, while some spearmen knelt on the first terrace below, ready for the battle. Passing Olympias, the young warrior, greeted with a thundering acclaim as the

leader of the faithful, rushed back through the long passage of the temple to the room where he had last seen Zoe. She was no longer there; but even still the lamp burnt before the sepulchre. He hastened onward on the search. A white scarf, which he had observed twined round her head when she had knelt, unconscious of his approach, arrested his attention. He picked it up, pressed it to his lips, and bound it round his hyacinthine locks like a turban. Again he entered chamber after chamber, but in vain; he had indeed given over the hasty search, and with a heavy heart was about to resume his ward at the temple gate, when a deep sigh, the echo of a sorrowful heart, caught his ear. It was Zoe. He rushed in. She was there, her head bent in grief, and her eyes fixed upon the ground. She turned her gaze slowly as she heard a step, and with the bound of the frightened antelope of the desert, sprang into his arms.

“Light of my life,” she sobbed, as she

leant her cheek upon the breast of the Greek.

“Zoe, my soul, my guardian spirit, to visit thee is to leave the dull earth and enter the Elysian Fields;” and he kissed her pale cheek, which kindled, like Pandora’s, into a new life at the soft pressure of his burning lips; he clasped her to his heart, and lavished upon her all the soft endearments of his native tongue.

A footstep was heard without. It was Olympias’.

“I thought I should find thee here. A lover can no more keep from his maiden than the night-moth from the torch’s flame,” he exclaimed, in a voice of chiding fondness. “But thou must hence now, and arm thee as a Grecian should.”

The trembling Zoe tore herself from his arms, and gazed inquiringly into his eyes, that were as radiant and full of love as Apollo’s might have been when he played invisible in the breeze around the soft cheek of Daphne.

“I have arms here,” continued Olympias, “and thou must dight them quickly, for there

are murmurings already at thy absence. Let Zoe cling to the shrine of the god, and breathe tender prayers for thy victorious return."

"I cannot wear these," said Jovius, looking contemptuously at the quilted breastplate and helmet made of crocodile-skin, which Olympias tendered. "I want the arms of my country, to nerve my arm and to guard the heart on which the precious image of my Zoe is impressed."

"Let not that hinder thee," said Olympias, "for I have in the armoury the armour of a Grecian king."

Bidding a tearful adieu to Zoe, and tearing himself with a backward glance from her, Jovius followed the philosopher into a chamber where lay scattered arms of Europe and of Asia. Around its walls, hung the Grecian helmet, the blazoned shield of Sicily, the target of the Nubian, the long scutum of the Roman legionary, the war-axe of Thrace, and the pilum of Italy. With hasty hands Jovius clad him-

self in the garb of one who fell, perhaps, at Salamis.

“Thou lookest like Achilles on Scamander’s plain,” said Olympias, jestingly. “Now would Zoe joy to see so trusty a warrior. But that sword, methinks, is of a truer temper than the copper blades that bent with the blows at Troy.”

A shout rang from the group that filled the chamber as Jovius stepped forth full armed for the battle, and glowing like Mars as the effulgence of the torches played upon his embossed armour. “The god has sent his regent!” they cried; as they shouted, the head of a dark phalanx wound slowly round the corner of the street in which the temple stood, and halted at the foot of the vast artificial hill on which the temple rose; the hands of a whole nation had assisted in piling it to the skies—poor aping of nature’s grandeur. Like the mouth of a furnace glowed the thirty dark portals of the temple;

its granite slabs had never rung with such shouts since they left their native rock.

There was a moment's silence, then, with a shout of battle, the light-armed legionaries prepared for the ascent of the steps that led to the sanctuary, while an officer who directed the attack reined in a foaming Iberian steed, around him grouped the standard-bearers and the inferior tribunes. A dark drift of arrows drove in the teeth of the daring assailants, as covering themselves under their targets they rushed up, sword in hand, towards the defenders of the first terrace—for on this side alone was the temple-citadel assailable. The holy stillness of the night was profaned by the war-cries of "Serapis!" "For the temple!" and counter-shouts of "Jesus and the Cross!" Some of the legionaries fell ere they had reached the first step, their brains crushed by the leaden pellets of the Nubian slingers, who showed their white teeth in savage glee, and shouted for joy when some more conspicuous

adversary fell under their blows ; some of them were stricken by death ere they had struggled past the first few steps ; while others, more fortunate and more agile, succeeded in winning their way to the first terrace, where they fought hand-to-hand with a band of white-robed idolaters, who, headed by Jovius, now rushed to meet them. Amongst these favoured of the gods were conspicuous a small band of British mountaineers, who, distinguished by their gold bracelets and their half-bared and blue-painted arms, clambered up the steps, as indifferent to the galling shower of missiles as if they had been but the pelting rain-showers of their own hills, and displaying all that untiring agility which few but mountaineers possess. When one of their number fell under the dart or arrow of their dusky antagonists, they gave a yell of fury, and only spurred on indeed more fiercely to the height above.

“ These are Titans indeed, who would scale heaven,” cried Olympias to one of a

party of Egyptians who were rushing to the contest; "but in the name of the god Serapis we will hurl them to Hades, or crush them with our blows."

"See there!" cried the priest of Serapis, who stood beside him; "thy Jovius is fighting hand-to-hand with one of the accursed blue-eyed warriors, who strikes like some spirit of Typhon's realm."

The philosopher looked. The young Greek was vainly striving to free himself from the grasp of a British warrior, who seemed endeavouring to topple him headlong over the terrace as he would have done an antagonist on his own native rocks. In vain Jovius exerted all the strength and skill of a Grecian athlete. Both hosts lulled for a moment in the strife to witness the result of the contest. Jovius was nearer. He was on the edge. Another moment, and an Arab shaft at the instant of victory pierced the brain of the painted chief. His grasp relaxed, he reeled; with a brazen clang he sank down below,

and rolling, all bleeding and crushed, from step to step, fell almost at the feet of the heavy-armed below. Raising his hands to heaven, Jovius picked up the sword of a fallen Egyptian, and rushing against the few fugitives who still remained, by word and blow now urged his companions to the contest.

With a shout echoed from above, the priests drove the remaining Romans over the terrace, and followed them down the descent, till the advance of their comrades repulsed the pursuers in turn. Some wretched men, with battered helmets and shattered breastplates, or with bloody targets all feathered with arrows, still alive, were dragged up into the temple, in spite of the missiles of their friends below, saved only for a death more horrible. There was debating below for a moment, then from the legionaries came forth the herald who had read the proclamation, holding a branch twisted with wool in his hand. As the crowd above lowered their weapons when they saw the sacred badge of

peace wave over the bodies of the dead, the herald ascended, and was ushered by a band of Alexandrians into the great hall of the gods, where Olympias, Jovius, and the chief supporters of Serapis were ready to receive him.

The herald was an old, scarred Roman veteran, who returned the angry frowns that met him with stern looks of defiance.

"I come," he said, "from the Prefect Cynegus to demand the surrender of this temple of the idol Serapis, and to offer a free pardon to all but the ringleaders of this rebellion against the great Emperor Theodosius. To all you citizens of Alexandria, and to ye aliens of Nubia, Arabia, and Syria, it is allowed to return unscourged and unfined to your houses; the sword of the executioner alone awaits the Philosopher Olympias, the priest Heredf, and this base traitor, Jovius, whom I see here with his armour yet wet with the blood of his comrades and his countrymen; one who has fallen from his

ancient glory, and on whose wretched head the great God, whose hell is even now flaming for the traitor, has lately so nearly sent the just punishment of his crimes. Citizens of Alexandria, with what answer shall I return?"

"With this," said the priest of Serapis, drawing a dagger from his sleeve, and rushing on the daring herald.

The hand of Jovius stopped him, and snatched the weapon from his hand.

"Return," he said to the herald, "in safety, and tell thy master that we have armed for the defence of the altars of a god whom we love. Go, and mutter no word of insolence, or thy head shall answer for thy speech."

Slowly, like a lion before the hunters, the herald raised the badge of peace, and strode silently from the room.

After a hasty deliberation of impassioned words and high resolves, the defenders again separated for the night—some to keep watch

in the court and avenues of the temple; some to guard against surprise, by bivouacking on the terraces below; others, by far the larger number, to guard the open entrances of the great temple. Jovius and Olympias visited each post, and harangued the warriors on their high duty and the necessity of incessant care against so redoubtable an enemy; while below was a hostile population of Christians, to whom they were hateful as the Bedouin is to the traveller. He roused their hearts by reciting the ancient glories of that land, which might still revive if they once could establish the empire of the old faith in their great city. Then, with eager step, the duties of the general discharged, Jovius sought eagerly Zoe's chamber, where he found her bending, like the muse of history; so he whispered in her ear, over some papyrus-roll, whose strange characters her father had taught her to read, for her love had taught her to fill her mind with the sublime beauties of the Grecian writers. Swift flew

the hours in the recital of the times that were past, and in aspirations and fears (stifled kisses) for the future.

The father sat at a distance, and looked with a delighted eye upon the happy lovers as they bent over some precious roll from the great library of the temple, cheek against cheek, the dark clusters of her hair held back by his gentle hand, lest they should overshadow the book. Need we dilate on their conversation — the unchangeable, instinctive language of Adam's children? — the same now in glance, and tone, and whisper, as when the world was still in her first fresh youth. The clepsydra spoke of dawn ere Jovius, led by an Ethiopian slave, retired to a distant chamber to snatch a few hours of sleep before the conflict of the day.

It was broad noon when he awoke, for even in his dark chamber some ray of light stole in from an aperture in the roof leading to an upper story of the temple which overlooked the court-yard. By the indistinct light he

could see that a tablet lay beside his couch, which was not there when he slept. It was written in the Greek character, in the handwriting of Olympias: "Zoe is in the secret chamber. Touch the eye of the serpent of eternity. Thine Olympias." What meant it? Where was Olympias, and why was Zoe immersed in the chamber of the tomb? Had the fight been renewed, or was it *over*? All these thoughts thronged in a moment through his mind. His first impulse was to fly to Zoe and place her in a place of safety, and then rejoining Olympias, who was doubtless on the watch, to resume the guidance of the conflict. But a dreadful foreboding seemed to quench the rising terror of his heart. All was dim, and no torch was there; how could he find his way through the dark passages? A rumbling overhead: it was as of some one attempting to descend into the chamber from the roof above. Silently he crouched in a dark corner as a black figure, which he recognised as that of the negro of the night before, holding a torch be-

tween its teeth, clambered down the aperture, and fell light as a cat upon the rocky floor beneath. In a moment the young Greek had seized his torch and half-strangled him in his grasp. A bare sacrificial knife fell from the belt of his short tunic.

“Spare me, noble sir!” he cried, half-throttled, in the beseeching voice of one more dead than alive with terror at the suddenness and vigour of the attack—“and I will tell thee all. It was Heredf who sent me hither to assassinate thee, for thou art suspected by the garrison of indifference to the cause, and art even hinted at as a base spy of the Roman prefect. So he told me when he gave this knife into my hand.”

“Wretched caitiff!” said the Greek, “I would kill thee at a blow were thy life not serviceable to one nobler than thyself. Art thou acquainted with all the dense labyrinth of the temple’s passages?”

“I am,” said the Ethiopian. “I have tended the altar of Serapis for thirty years,

and know every chamber here as well as thou dost the streets of Athens."

"Lead me then at once to the secret entrance of the city of tombs, whose portal is known to few. On this condition alone I save thy life — attempt flight, and thou diest."

With quick step the negro led the way through the dim avenues, some of which he remembered to have trod the preceding evening, the horrible laughter of his guide still echoing onward against the rock, and contrasting strangely with that place of death. Still in the silent chambers sat the imperturbable statues, though some of the lamps which burnt the preceding evening before their shrines had gone out, as if some great convulsion had delayed the usual attendance of the priests. Blending with the scenes of yesterday, a deep melancholy then hung over the mind of Jovius. In vain he endeavoured to learn from the Ethiopian how the war went on without. "He knew not," he said, "but he had heard that the legionaries,

attempting to surprise the temple at daybreak, had slain some sleeping Arabs, but had been beaten back with great loss, and driven through the streets to their tents in the Forum." The heart of Jovius glowed within him at the tidings, but he had no time for reflection, for at the moment the Ethiopian stopped suddenly, and exclaimed:

"We are now at the farthest limits of the temple: the entrance to the Necropolis is known but to the chosen."

"I have a roll which tells me more," said Jovius, opening the papyrus, as he entered a small niche in the rock, richly decorated with hieroglyphics, conspicuous among which was the serpent, the emblem of eternity. Taking the torch from the hand of the negro, he bent down before it, and obeyed the injunction of the philosopher. In an instant a stone rolled back and disclosed an aperture, through which he leapt, amid the horrid laughter of the negro, which rang in his ears like the rejoicing of the fiends. Quicker than thought,

a sword descended upon his casque; he fell heavily on the floor of the cave, and an armed hand seized his sword. As it flew from his grasp, a peal of fierce merriment from a well-known voice rang in his ears. He looked up. Could that be Carmac, his old British comrade of the Lion legion? It was.

“Why, Jovius,” he cried, in bad Greek, “whither so fast? First running like a thief from the brave Lion legion and those with whom thou hast lived and fought so long, and now running from the Egyptian dogs all in stealth. Why, man, thy neck here is not worth an obole, and thy head, thou knowest, is worth more than that outside. Thou art betrayed. Olympias, who cheated thee into a rebel, has fallen in a sally. Suspected by thy friends, he rushed forth this morning at the head of a band of mad priests, and fell fighting. His wounds were all before. But come, thou art my prisoner, good Jovius. Come, grasp my hand, for I have much to tell thee. Look not so

fierce, man, for I have some in ambuscade thou knowest not of. Gallus!" he shouted down the dark passage beyond. A dozen armed heads presented themselves from the dark vault beside him, and withdrew. "Thou art foully wronged," he continued; "thou hast fled, Jovius, from the roguish Christians to liars and murderers among the Pagans. There are traitors within thy camp; the trembling merchant Hebon, and the cowardly priest Heredf, told the prefect of this secret entrance—but the death of Olympias, who alone knew the secret of its opening, has kept me here panting for action since the daybreak; 'twas this priest who sent that grinning Ethiopian yonder to shorten thy days before thy time. But now let us on silently, for all the defenders are at the entrance, and we shall take them in the rear, and catch them like a wolf in a pitfall."

Hastily Jovius told his tale, and the motives which had led him to forsake the service of the emperor.

“Thy philosopher lied,” said the Briton, laughingly. “None knew of thy flight till the orders came for the embarkation hither; it was a secret messenger from a monk told us that thou hadst been seen in the temple with the cursed Greek.”

“Undone!” groaned Jovius; “on all sides lost. But despair is left, and death.”

“Think not of it so bitterly,” said the Briton, merrily; “but now let us march. Thou grinning black imp, carry the torch in the van, and lead us on to the shrine of the great idol through these rabbit paths.”

Silently, with cautious tread, they wound through the long passage, till they reached the very sanctuary of the god.

“Behold the idol Serapis!” cried the Briton; and rushing forward he tore down the purple hangings that hid the niche in which it stood. Its colossal and silent majesty for a moment arrested the hand of the spoiler. Like the Jupiter of Phidias, its giant limbs were sheathed in plates of gold. It sat on a

golden throne encrusted with countless jewels, blazing in light, while in his right hand he held a sceptre, in the place of the flaming thunderbolt of the Grecian god, in its left it held a monster, with the head of a serpent and the heads of a dog, and a lion, and a wolf. The superstitious Greek trembled before its serene majesty, for he had heard that, if a polluted hand violated the majesty of the god, heaven and earth would sink back to chaos.

“Foul idol!” said the Briton, careless of his fears, upheaving his battle-axe and poisoning it for the blow, “may the God of the Christians nerve my arm against the demons of hell and the realms of darkness!” He struck, and the giant head of the idol fell, with a dull metallic sound, to the earth, disclosing springs and pipes that led from a small cavity within its gigantic body to a chamber behind the shrine.

“Such are the gods of Egypt,” he cried to Jovius, as the shouts of his party rang

through the air, and the Romans rushed forth to attack the guards of the entrance, whom the sound of the blow had attracted. The warm-hearted Briton tarried for a moment behind ere he rushed to the charge.

“Jovius,” he said, grasping warmly the hand of the Greek, “I pity thee from my heart. Thou art ignorant of the true gods, and the false deities whom thou didst worship have now proved as helpless as the friends thou didst trust. Before to-morrow this fair temple will be a heap of defaced ruins. Its treasures shall be pillaged and the cross planted in its place. Now, fare thee well. Away to some place of safety. Take ship from the port below, and hie thee to Syria. Venture among our legionaries, and thy life were not worth a moment’s purchase. I have much camp news to tell thee, specially of the fat tribune Nicias, and of how we kept a sallow Egyptian for six months on the flesh of the holy cats—tales that would kill a mummy with laughter, and rouse thee, wert thou going to run the

gauntlet the next moment through the ranks of thy own old legion. Farewell."

Again he grasped his hand warmly; and then poising his redoubted axe, the light-hearted and brave Briton rushed to join the battle, the sounds of which rang fearfully, mingled with shrieks and shouts, from without.

For but an instant Jovius stood gazing at the last shivered monument of a fallen religion—fit emblem of his hopes; then hastily grasping a torch which a soldier had left on the altar, he rushed in quest of Zoe. His eye shone with some dreadful resolve. He searched in vain. The shouts grew nearer—it seemed as if the idolaters were driven back and were flying to the interior of the temple. The time might yet be too short. Swifter he flew—swift as when a boy he bounded over the plain of the Ilissus. Again he rushed through the secret opening, now for ever disclosed, for a soldier had wrenched

the covering from the fastenings and dashed the statue to pieces.

A light approached; a lamp. It was Zoe, her hair dishevelled, and her robe thrown hastily over her head; then flew weeping into his arms.

“Oh, Jovius!” she cried, “where is my father? What tidings from without?”

“Olympias is well—he is at rest.”

“Glare not so dreadfully,” cried Zoe. “What mean thy words?” Then she clung passionately to her lover, and gazed into his frenzied eyes.

“Let us hasten,” he said, “to the distant chamber by the beach.”

They gained it. With hasty hands he formed a pile of dry mummy-cases.

“I hear steps,” she cried; “we are lost. Oh, Serapis, save us! Oh, Thoth, ruler of heaven, hear us!” And again she clung to her lover.

He threw her on the pile; then firing it with his torch, and blowing the flames that

communicated with dreadful rapidity to the inflammable wood and linen, he leapt beside her and clasped her in his arms.

“Kneph, save us!” she cried.

“We go together to the Elysian fields,” he said. “O Zeus, where are thy thunderbolts?” he cried, as the fierce tongues of flame shot up fiercer, and Zoe fell insensible into his scorched arms.

The morrow dawned upon a pile of blood-stained ruins; the Temple of Serapis, the last stronghold of Paganism, had fallen for ever; the creed of Osiris and Isis had on that night faded from the land of the Nile, like the vapours of the marsh that pass away from the sun’s face. In vain the trembling Pagans trusted that the angry God would retard the rising inundation, and that famine might destroy the rejoicing Christians, though they perished beside them. But slowly the calm Nile rose and fertilised its subject land, insensible to the voice of human passion. The very ruins of the temple were destroyed, in spite,

as the monks affirmed, of the exertions of a black demon, who attempted to hinder all the efforts of the workmen.

The machinery by which the priesthood had for centuries imposed on the credulity of an ignorant people was exposed to the light of day. Dark vaults were broken open, and skeletons of the victims of priestly vengeance were discovered. The secret entrance from the shore into the Necropolis was diligently explored by the express orders of the prefect, who, however, took care not to trust his own perfumed body within its dark chambers. Crowds of suddenly converted Pagans emulated the most fanatic monks in defacing the hieroglyphics and the rich sculpture of the vaults. The serpent of eternity was peculiarly obnoxious to the Christians, for they set it down at once as the emblem of the old serpent the devil; while the cow of Isis, as resembling the golden calf that led the Jews to sin, was crushed beneath the blows of the zealous destroyers.

The most ardent proselyte felt an increased

glow of attachment to the new faith when he saw the unsunned treasures of the priests glowing beneath the light of a thousand waving torches. The poorest slave in Alexandria wore, for a time, the embroidered vestments of priest and king; while jewels lay in the streets that night as plentiful as pebbles on the shore. But one thing was beyond explanation by the most penetrating. In a small chamber of the Necropolis they found some human bones lying amid a half-burnt pile, and still smoking.

The cruelties shown to the prisoners by the Alexandrians was terribly retaliated upon the Egyptian heads; those that were not slain fighting desperately, hemmed in by enemies, were cruelly tortured and thrown into the sea. Of Jovius and Zoe, the beautiful daughter of the Grecian philosopher, nothing could be heard. A reward of ten pounds of gold was offered in vain throughout Syria for their arrest, and the remembrance of them soon died away. The British chieftain rose to distinction, and was

killed in the Hunnish wars; and the prefect Cynegus was slain soon after in an insurrection of a Syrian legion which mutinied in despair of escape from the oppression of its petty tyrant.

THE RETURN.

ON the 1st of March, Mr. Parkins, purser, going into the crow's-nest, observed a lane of clear water, narrow, and not altogether continuous, spreading in the offing. The crack commenced at "White Reef," as the sailors called a certain huge berg; but the ice at the entrance of Hooper's Bay still remained firm and unflawed.

It was not till the 2nd of March that clear symptoms of milder weather presented themselves. Siderfin observed, half an hour before sunrise on that day, the red light brighter near the south-eastern horizon, and there a column of light was also visible above the sun. The snow to the south-west began to

glaze, a thick mist came on, and in the evening the breeze freshened from the southward, sending up the thermometer a hair's breadth.

On Tuesday, the 7th, the snow on the black paint of the ship's stern, which faced the south, slightly thawed; while the snow on the yellow paint, to the north, remained still hard. On the same day a snow drift on land, seized by the wind, blew up in columns a hundred feet high.

I need not relate how, gradually and gradually, the openings in the ice widened and let us forth free.

I think the 11th was our most dangerous day, for we were sailing among huge icebergs, and loose heavy fragments, on which the ship frequently struck with a heavy shock. Sometimes the weather was so thick with snow that we made small progress, and could hear the bears growling upon the passing bergs. Seals, ivory gulls, and the little auk were now growing more numerous.

On the 21st, however, we sounded in two hundred fathoms, and were reassured of sand and shell, which gave us hopes; but on the following day, instead of getting in with the coast at about the latitude of Mount Raleigh, we came however to a compact and impenetrable body, I may say phalanx, of ice, over which we could not see any clear water from the mast-head.

Soon after noon on the 24th we crossed at last the Arctic Circle, having been within it five months and three weeks. At noon on the 25th we reached the latitude of $66^{\circ} 13' 14''$, being two miles and three quarters to the southward of the dead reckoning.

On the 26th of September we stood to the westward again; and finding the packed ice extending everywhere, and precluding all hope of further examining the coast, Captain Beaver determined, the state of the ice being so unfavourable, to now make the best of his way to England. The boats were therefore hoisted

in—the ship made snug while in smooth water under the lee of the ice, and a course was then shaped to the E.S.E., in order to obtain an offing before bearing away to the southward.

On the 14th of October our bowsprit was carried away close to the gammoning. The foremast followed it over side, but we soon got up a jury-mast, and on the 26th (afternoon) struck soundings in seventy fathoms—coarse sand and broken shell—sure signs of nearing land.

Sunday, the 29th, we arrived at Hull.

THE END.

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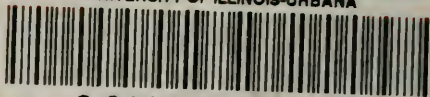
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